

PHILIPPA AT THE CHATEAU



MARGARITA SPALDING GERRY

PHILIPPA AT THE CHATEAU





"BUT, MA BIEN-AIMÉE, HE IS THEN GOOD, THAT ROSS CUTHBERT"

[See p. 304]

PHILIPPA AT THE CHATEAU

By

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"PHILIPPA'S FORTUNE," "THE TOY SHOP," ETC.



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"BUT, MA BIEN-AIMÉE, HE IS THEN GOOD, THAT
ROSS CUTHBERT" *Frontispiece*

THE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE SOMEHOW MADE
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CHAPTER I

“*TIENS*, how you are overwhelmed! What right has a schoolgirl with so many clothes? Even an American school-girl?” Mademoiselle Mimi could not have failed to observe the box of candy Philippa had put down to open the door. But she scrupulously ignored it, and showed nothing but solicitude in her sparkling face. “I have come at just the right moment to give you the most sage advice.”

“Indeed, I need it,” said Philippa, heartily. “You see, I had to have clothes for so many different kinds of things: traveling, staying at Murray Bay, making visits to Mother’s old friends. And sometimes we have needed thin things, and on the Saguenay it was as

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cold as winter. Then, when I decided to stay here at school and we bought all the things in Montreal that Mother thought I'd need, she said I hadn't any idea of what a Canadian winter would be. Why, Mademoiselle, everything that'll hold clothes in this room is full and not half the things have been put away." Philippa made one of her unconsciously dramatic gestures of despair.

"This is *assurément* one of those moments when 'a feller needs a friend,' as your American droll artist says it. It is now the moment for the wise instructor to tell you a little how to use the head instead of—the muscles." This, with a funny glance at the distracted piles of clothing.

"Do. And do have some candy. I just found this. Mother tucked it away without my knowing it. I suppose she knew just how I'd feel at this stage. It isn't half as much fun eating it alone."

Mademoiselle Mimi went to the door she had just closed and inspected the corridor up and down.

"It might well be," she said, as she closed it again, "that some of the girls have already arrived—sometimes they motor down from

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Montreal or Quebec. They might follow me here. And they would never again regard me with the same awe if they knew how I am *gourmande* for the *bons-bons*—how like a pig I am for the candy, I should say.”

“Now I know I’m glad I decided to stay here and learn French. Does French make everything sound so much better? But—honest—do they feel awe for you?”

“You do not think, then, that *mes élèves*—pupils I should have said—I am yet in the vacation habit of talking my own tongue. Do you not think I am fitted to inspire with fear? But wait, then, you very cocky American girl. You will see. It is only because you are the daughter of my mother’s old friend that I permit you to approach me *sans cérémonie*. Also, that I permit myself to sit on your bed and devour your candy.”

She did so seat herself and her cheeks had a deeper pink and her eyes had a brighter sparkle as she selected with satisfaction a large and rich chocolate. And every separate black curl on her head seemed to crisp with delight as her small white teeth met in it.

Sitting thus, one little foot tucked up under her, Mademoiselle Mimi seemed no more

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grown up than fifteen-year-old Philippa herself. She certainly held up her own end in the forays on the candy. But between mouthfuls she instructed Philippa.

"All you have that is warm you must have where you can get at it easily every day—your fur coat, school uniforms, sweaters, coats. You have already been told, you say, of the woolen stockings for the house and the woolen over-stockings for outdoors. Woolen bloomers you have—or do you wear tights? For myself, I wear tights for I admire the svelte lines, and svelte lines do not accord with bloomers—especially as I have a tendency deplorable to be not quite so thin in the hips as are the angle-worm ladies of the fashion papers. I, myself, can not see where they bestow all the organs the books on physiology seem to think are requisite." She paused to laugh, a musical little laugh. "Then, for *les grandes occasions*, when the English families—who are more English than the English—of this lar-r-r-ge place assemble for one of the soirées for which the Château de Liberté is justly celebrated you will need the afternoon frock. Then you may wear a costume of taffeta or *crêpe de chine*—not

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décolleté—that is not permitted—but thinner than your Sunday dress.”

“Then the girls here do wear ‘Sunday dresses,’ ” Philippa said, laughing. “Mother insisted that I should have one. I didn’t know what she meant. But I said if I had to have a warm dress besides the uniform it would have to be duvety. And I have two afternoon dresses, Mademoiselle.”

“Then decide which one you cannot live without and hide the other,” said Mademoiselle gravely. “For then you will be like all the others. If you try to make a Sunday dress do for an afternoon dress you are unlike the others and if you have two afternoon dresses you are unlike them because the Château encourages the simple things. With school girls—or school boys—it is never safe to have more or less than the average.”

“I don’t think ——”

“Not in the States perhaps, but here it is so,” Mademoiselle said with finality, reaching for another bon-bon. “How I am *gourmande* for the sweets,” she interpolated again, a certain self-reproach in her voice. “This must truly be the last. Yes, you will find use for a while in the fall for that sport suit, and

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the *tailleur* you will wear to church until it grows too cold. These, with plenty of blouses, are the things you will need to have in your closets or bureau drawers, with a hat for Sunday and the tuque that I see under that chair for sports in winter. All other clothes, after you have arranged your room, you may repack in your trunk and the trunk will be put where you can get at it easily when spring comes. No—you will have no need for dancing dresses—and do put away that delicate lingerie. We have often the so clumsy *blanchiseuses*—how I must strive to use only English words. It is not fair that I should not when we require the girls to speak only French ——”

“Speak only French!” Philippa repeated in real fright. “Why I couldn’t speak French now to save my life. I’ve had only first French in the high school at home and ——”

“My dear child!” Mademoiselle’s bright face was quite clouded in her sympathy for Philippa’s distress. “You must not be so frightened. We help you always. You can always ask for words. If you know to say, ‘*Qu’est-ce-que c’est—?*’ which means, ‘What is——’—the French word that you do not know,

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for example, you are perfectly safe among the dragons—especially when the dragons are my mother and myself. We do not, of course, expect the impossible. But we do want the conscientious effort. And there is truly no other way to learn to speak a language but to *have* to speak it. And of what use is it to read the words of a beautiful language if you cannot speak it? And now I go. It is perhaps the last time that I can speak to you like this.”

“Why?” Philippa was alarmed. “What is going to happen?”

Mademoiselle laughed softly.

“*O, ma petite*, what an intense little soul it is. I mean only that I must consider the other girls. I have to remember my dignity. I am not so immense, you know, and I have the pink cheeks, and my eyes are not yet dull like those of Miss Shelby. And—I am sometimes in the heart quite like the girls.” She stopped and eyed Philippa a little pathetically. “So I must put up something that is a barrier so they will feel that I am not a human being but, instead, a teacher. I must remember my dignity. And if I am like a friend to you they will be jealous.”

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“What?” Many things seemed strange to Philippa to-day. “Why should they?”

Mademoiselle eyed her with an expression of ancient wisdom that went oddly with her cunning soubrette face.

“But if school girls—boarding-school girls—do not fear and dislike their teacher they must always have a sentimental love for her. So I cannot be friendly with one more than another. Else they weep or they get angry. They would not be pleasant for you. And my mother and I wish well to you.” Then, seeing Philippa’s serious face, she laughed mischievously. “Do not look so sad, my little Philippa. It will not always be so—not every minute of my life. There will be times when you and I can have some friendliness. But you will remember, *n’est ce pas*, to treat me with exalted respect in public? Now I go.”

“But why must you go now?”

“It is, because, if I do not, my mother will tire herself to death. She is a saint, my mother.” She spoke with a sudden passionate devotion. “And I am ashamed that I have so many errors of the flesh. She would take only one bon-bon. And want only one. And *forget it*. No, no, truly no more for me.

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"I must mortify the flesh." She threw back a sparkling smile and left the room.

Philippa went on with her work. It was simple enough now that she knew exactly what to do. Soon all was in order. She sat at ease and gazed around.

Perhaps it was because there was so little in it that it seemed to Philippa the most exquisitely clean room she had ever seen. The woodwork was enameled white; the single bedstead was white; the smoothly drawn sheets and counterpane the perfection of laundering and faintly redolent of orris; the little old-fashioned bureau and washstand white with the plainest—and glossiest—of white linen hemstitched covers. The walls were painted a soft gray and the floor gray also. There was a study table with a plain dark green cover and a shining old "student-lamp" upon it. There were curtains of plain clear white muslin. Beyond that, except for Philippa's toilet things and a few other trifles, nothing.

Leisure and the departure of Mademoiselle began to put a different aspect on affairs. The autumn chill was in the old red brick house which it had seemed absurd to call the

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“Château” until she knew what “Château de Liberté” meant and that her own mother had originated the name when she had been Madame’s pupil the first year of the school’s existence. Now that she was quiet herself she began to hear a noise and commotion in the halls that had seemed monastically quiet an hour ago. There were bumping sounds of men dragging luggage about, and voices.

But they were strange voices. All at once it came to her that nobody in the big house was concerned with her or needed her. The knowledge brought a curious shock with it. Philippa had rarely been away from home before and then either with members of her family or to visit old friends or relatives. She had often imagined herself going off to boarding school, and had always expected to have four years away from home at college. But her imagination had been alive with the fun detailed in books, so many girls under one roof like a big perpetual house party—the larks they would have—the midnight spreads—the new friendships. None of the imagined scenes had begun like this. The thought of her own warm sunny room at home flashed on her, filled with cheerful color

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and with a hundred objects, each one of which had meant a part of her life, someone who had thought lovingly of her. Into the picture of that room came her mother—although her mother had only just started on her way home. Her mother was calling her—her sister Doreen came ——

“I am not the homesick kind,” Philippa said out loud, and firmly. The little traveling clock her mother had just bought for her struck ten.

“Plenty of time for a walk before lunch,” Philippa decided, and resolutely got up. “There’s an interesting walk Muzz and I didn’t have time to take to a place she started to tell me something or other about.”

When she had brushed out her bobbed hair and put on the coat to her suit and the duvetyn hat that she privately considered was especially becoming to her, she brought out the veil that she had teased her mother—made soft by prospective parting—to buy for her. When she had fastened it on it made her feel queer and smothered and pushed her eye-lashes up uncomfortably, but all that was offset by her conviction that she looked at least eighteen in it. That made her feel able to

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cope with the world on equal terms. If she should happen to meet any girl on the stairs or in the hall she would present a dignified appearance. They would know she was not to be trifled with.

Just outside the door she did meet one of the girls, evidently just going back to her room at the end of Philippa's own corridor. The girl, looking up and catching her eye, smiled with a kind of absent, lazy charm. Somehow she quite took Philippa's breath away. She looked Oriental and magnificent. This was not only because of the rather gorgeously embroidered dressing gown she wore. It was in her smooth skin which, colorless as it was, seemed underlaid with bloom; in her long, black-fringed eyes with their extraordinary large irises of a soft leaf-brown; in her full and red lips; in the bronze of her hair, which seemed to have flecks of gold underneath the glaze like bronze luster ware. Philippa passed the moments after the apparition passed swiftly building her accustomed air castles about an immediate friendship with this amazing girl, a friendship which should be, somehow, absolutely different from any she had ever had before.

CHAPTER II

EMPIRE STREET with its fringe of willows mirrored in the water, skirted the St. Lawrence. On the far side it held, as well as the Château, the old-fashioned homes of the English families of the little French-Canadian village. At one end was a quaint little disused house of pinkish plaster with a tree dropping away from it like a willow plume from a middle-aged lady's rather too gay hat. This spot was important for her to-day merely because it marked the meeting of Empire with a straggling street which eventually led to the place Mrs. Gale had told her daughter "something or other about." Beyond the village Philippa could see that it was an inviting road; the trees arched over it and the sunlight fell through the leaves into gay little patterns on the pleasant shade. An unknown road unwinding before her had always been a fascination to Philippa. But here, in a land other than her own, peopled

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—in that part of the Province of Quebec at least—chiefly with French-Canadian “*habitants*” who looked different from Americans and who talked a patois that even French people found hard to understand, a walk became an adventure.

“What would I do if one of them should speak to me?” With her heart beating fast Philippa followed the road.

Clear of the village, in a few minutes she heard the rippling of water. And that seemed almost as startling a thing to her as though she had been Champlain when he first sailed into the broad St. Lawrence.

“It can’t be the St. Lawrence,” she thought. “That is too broad and deep to make that sound.” First a field divided her from the water; then only a narrow strip of green backed by a splendid disorderly tangle of goldenrod and purple asters and a screen of trees that shut out all but an occasional glimpse of the stream; soon the road followed the bank of the little river. Both of its shores were bordered with willows which arched over the water until its surface was all a cool green flecked with golden ripples where the sun struck through.

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Even the occasional *cabane* had stopped and Philippa had the road and the river all to herself. A little more of the happy busy stillness, of the murmur of the water, of a sun-flecked world and Philippa was distinctly glad that she was alive and had forgotten that she was inclined to feel lonely and, moreover, that she was fifteen and thinking about growing up some day. The veil became a nuisance and she took it off; her gloves were uncomfortable and she rolled them into a ball and stuck them in her pocket. She got as near as she could to the edge of the water, launched leaf-boats, skipped stones and splashed herself with water.

At last she came to a place where there was a tiny sandy beach and beyond that shallow ripples ran over a shelf of white stone. It was too tempting; the day had become pleasantly warm; there was nobody in sight. Forgetting that she had no towel to dry her feet on, Philippa stripped off shoes and stockings and waded in. She splashed around happily, forgetting she was alone, shrieking with delight when the current ran so swiftly that she could pretend to herself that she was frightened.

She was looking about for something with

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which to sound the stream just beyond her before venturing further when she heard the sound of voices coming along the road she had just traveled. At home, of course, at the Cove in Maine, where the Gales usually spent their summers, this would not have been alarming. But here, where a road might be haunted by either the unknown *habitant* or the stiff English-Canadian of whom Mademoiselle had chattered, it was a really shocking complication to be so caught. She hurried back to the shore, crouched down on a moss-covered root, pulled her skirt over her bare wet feet, and tried to make herself very small and inconspicuous.

The voices came so near that she could tell they were two, a feminine and a masculine voice. The feminine voice sounded young; the masculine—she couldn't tell. They were very near; she could see them moving through a tracery of green boughs. One moment she thought they were looking at her and she shivered absurdly. They stopped. She was in a real panic. But they seemed to be debating something. They were not going to find her out; evidently she couldn't be seen from the road, crouched in the shade as she was.

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Emboldened by this, her curiosity pricked, it was fun to peer out at these unconscious strangers. No—it wasn't so much fun. Something made Philippa feel uncomfortably like a spy. The girl turned her face upward so the sun shone full on it. It was the girl she had just seen in the hall at the Château. But the expression on her face somehow made Philippa feel guilty to have witnessed it when the girl didn't know anyone was looking. It wasn't her father with her; it was a much younger man.

"And I don't believe it can be a relative. Oh, I'm so glad they are turning back, I don't believe I could have stood it without letting them know. *Oh ———!*" As they turned the man bent his head and—Philippa blushed scarlet. When they had gone out of her sight again she managed to get her feet dry and her shoes and stockings on again.

"I must have been mistaken," she thought. "*He couldn't* have kissed her." She felt terribly uncomfortable for a long time. "She would never forgive me if she knew."

But soon the road turned a sharp angle to the stream and led through a grassy lane to a great stone gate in a low stone wall. The

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gate was open. As a matter, of course, she went through.

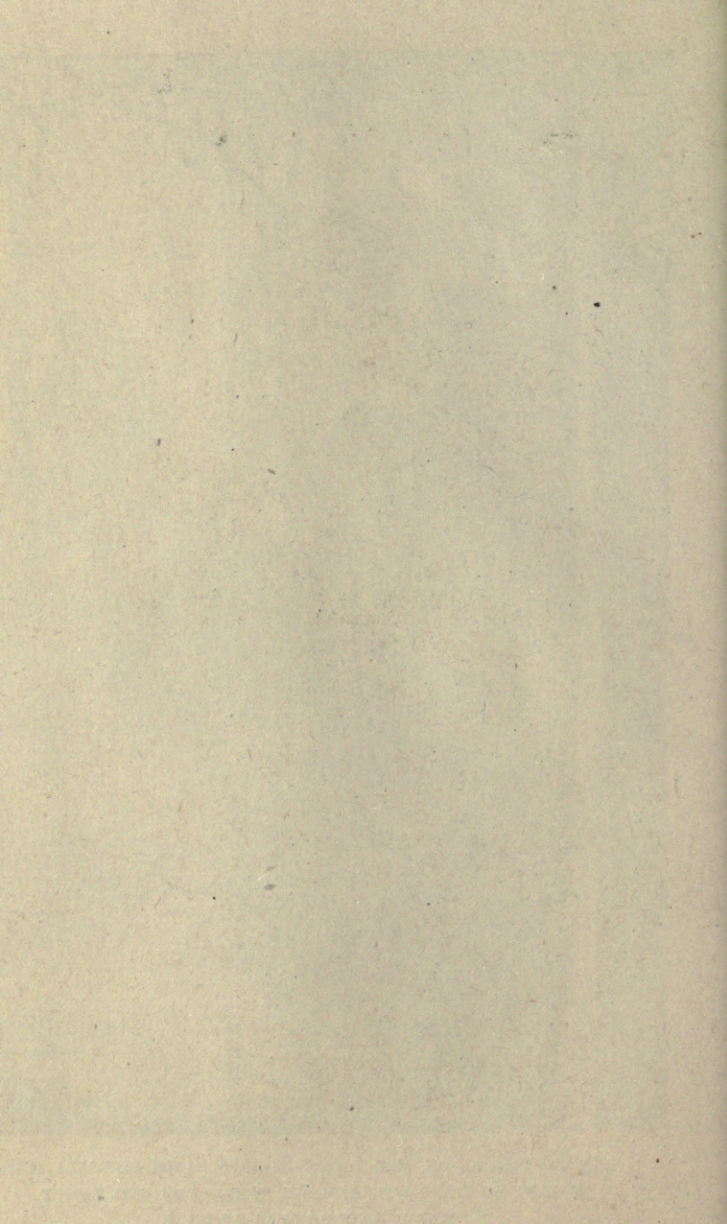
A driveway bordered with splendid old trees encircled a green space that had evidently once been a lawn, an approach to a ruined old house of some pretensions to dignity. The walls, of rough gray stone, were still intact, although the wooden gallery in front showed gaps where planks had fallen and the sloping roof sagged into a great hole near the eaves.

On fire with curiosity, Philippa went all around the house. A long, rambling wooden addition, evidently meant for kitchen and servants' quarters, extended almost to a flight of stone steps that led down to a boat landing. The half-ruined stables and carriage house showed that some one must have lived in the old stone house in a good deal of state, although it was a severely undecorated oblong and on a rather small scale. The dignity and beauty of the location, its desertion, all stimulated her easily stirred imagination.

Sitting for a moment in a delicious haze of surmises and pictures, on a sound step of the flight that had led up to the gallery, she caught sight of a tiny steeple that peeped



THE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE SOMEHOW MADE PHILIPPA FEEL
GUILTY TO HAVE WITNESSED IT WHEN THE GIRL DIDN'T
KNOW ANYONE WAS LOOKING



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through the clustered trees to the right of the driveway. Jumping up she made her way through bushes and young saplings that had sprung up all over what had evidently once been a field. As she went on she fancied she heard steps and paused, a little frightened. It was a rather remote spot for a solitary girl to encounter a stranger in. But when she finally came upon what had evidently once been a little church, she saw no one there.

"I'm getting scary," she told herself. "Why should I mind even if I meet a man. They're not going to eat me up even if French-Canadians do talk in such a queer violent manner."

The tiny chapel, too, was of rough gray stone.

"It must have been built at the same time," thought Philippa, quite pluming herself on her wisdom. The windows were too high up for her to see through even if they had not had boards nailed across them. She tried the door, but found it locked. She was so disappointed that she shook the door viciously.

The knob turned in her hands and the door swung open. In the doorway, smiling down upon her, was a tall young man whose blue

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eyes, rather small features and fair hair bore unmistakably the English stamp. Moreover, to make him still more picturesque, he wore rough tweed knickers and belted Norfolk coat and his left arm was in a black silk sling.

“Did you really want to get into the church, now?” he asked, still smiling.

There was something so entirely reassuring about him that Philippa said, with entire frankness.

“Yes, I did. I didn’t know there was anything like that here, you see, and I was wondering—can you tell me about it?”

She made a very engaging picture as she looked up at the young man, her eyes bright with interest and soft with all the romances she had been weaving for herself about the old house and the chapel. Her brown hair fluffed out from under the brown hat that was just the shade of the darkest tones of her hair and caught up with a jeweled quill of the copper tones with which her hair was shot. Her trim coat suit and her smart russet shoes proclaimed her—although the young man would have been puzzled to know why—an American.

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"Don't you have anything like this in the States?" he asked a little teasingly.

"Why, how did you know I came from the United States? Oh—perhaps Madame told you."

A curious expression came over his good-looking face.

"Madame d'Albert is not in the habit of confiding in me," he said a little stiffly. "But one does not need to be told some things. Would you like to come in? There's nothing much to see, I'm afraid, but ruin. It hasn't been used for years. In the early days all the English people in Lanoraie attended services here held by the chaplain of the Cuthberts—the Seigneurs."

"Oh, what fun!" said Philippa. "The private chapel of a Seigneur; it's the first really old thing I ever saw except in Quebec. We make a great fuss in our country over Faneuil Hall and Independence Hall, and I suppose they're *new* compared with this. But I should think the one who's Seigneur now would have it repaired. I'd be awfully vain if I had a chapel like that in my family. It's nicer than having a greenhouse or a breakfast room."

"There isn't any 'Seigneur' any more."

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"But there are members of the family left, for my mother told me so. She used to be here years ago at the school, you know. That's why she brought me here to see Lannoraie. And then I decided to stay."

"So you're one of the girls at the Château," he said, smiling very pleasantly. "But perhaps your mother didn't tell you that the modest revenues of the first Cuthbert have shrunk to almost nothing. And the present 'Seigneur' has things to do with the remnant rather than to repair ancient chapels. Still—perhaps he still does come here now and then just to remind himself that there's still some reason for him to hold up his head even if—— Suppose you come inside and look. There are memorial tablets and a rather interesting old pulpit. Chaps who know tell me it's jolly well worth looking at. It was sent over from England."

So Philippa stepped inside the tiny chapel and, as well as she could for fallen plaster, tried to reconstruct for herself the scene when a group of English aristocrats and their followers gathered in this little sanctuary in the wilderness to worship. And, somehow, the Lord of the Manor of those days had

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much the same negligent manner as the young man who looked about at the stained memorial tablets, a little moodily, at her side.

The pulpit was, in truth, "jolly well worth looking at," Philippa thought, loving to use the phrase which, previously, she had known only in books about English life. It was a corkscrew affair, of heavily carved wood, so black with age that she couldn't tell at all of what wood it had been made. It was impossible not to think of the succession of clergymen who had filled the pulpit and of the congregations who listened, the ladies and gentlemen in picturesque silks and velvets imported from England, the retainers in somber fustian.

When they were outside Philippa glanced rather timidly up at the young man. He was older than she had thought, quite distinctly mature to her eyes, and a sudden embarrassment at the thought that she had been talking to a strange man to whom she had not been introduced, made her a little awkward. Inside the chapel that had not seemed to matter; he had appeared almost as boyish as her brother Bayard, or even Jeff Randolph. He made no motion toward accompanying her

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further but, with a "good morning," took off his hat somewhat playfully, as one would to a child, and made his way toward the house.

If this had been even a year ago Philippa would not have given this chance encounter another thought; this English-looking young man, evidently older than Mademoiselle, was clearly not her concern. But now, on the road back, she couldn't help thinking about him, wondering what he had thought of her—whether she seemed just a little girl to him or whether he thought, perhaps, that she was seventeen or eighteen instead of fifteen.

"Grown-up girls, even women, wear their hair bobbed now," she thought. "I'm sorry I had taken off the veil. He smiled at me as if he thought I was grown up when he asked me if I was one of the girls at the school. He held the door open for me, too. And he told me things about the chapel and all. But I didn't like the way he teased me about coming from 'the States.' Of course, I suppose I can't expect at first to understand young men as well as just boys. If it were Jeff, now, I'd know exactly what he was thinking."

CHAPTER III

PHILIPPA went to lunch with her heart beating faster than usual. The dining room was already familiar to her. It was a large room, with bare polished floor and walls a freshly painted warm tan. There were two long tables at right angles to each other, of which only the one at which Philippa sat was in use. Against the wall in front of her was a long serviceable buffet in walnut almost black with age; a serving table against another wall and the necessary chairs and tray-rests completed the furniture. It was a strictly utilitarian scene, so impersonal that it made Philippa feel lonesome. Waiting for the signal to rise, Philippa fell into a deep well of isolation. In the effort to escape from this she directed her eyes toward the other side of the table.

Philippa was looking forward to meeting the ones who had already come, with sus-

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pense. That was a new attitude for Philippa, who was sometimes charged by the exasperated maids at home with "cluttering up the house so with girls you couldn't see the furniture." But with home already beginning to seem so hopelessly far away that she had had to warn herself several times that she mustn't think of it, things were very different. She tried to laugh as she told herself that she must have much the same feeling about those beings who were to share this strange new voyage with her, as each inhabitant of the Ark probably experienced when he watched the embarkation of the rest of Noah's selection of house guests.

"Suppose they don't like me!" She had a sinking feeling at the pit of her stomach. Possibly it was the first time that Philippa had ever bothered to ask herself that question.

Only four of the fifteen girls had arrived, she found, not counting herself. With a thrill of excitement she saw that the unusual looking girl whom she had unintentionally spied upon was almost directly opposite. She gave Philippa the same impression of magnificence as before, although the dress she wore was of neutral tone enlivened only by

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a little embroidery in dull metallic threads. Philippa tried to catch her eye, but she seemed to see no one, staring straight ahead of her in a not very pleasant day-dream.

“What would she think if she knew what I had seen?”

There were two other girls, evidently elder and younger sister at her side, the older one explaining everything to the little girl with the air of the oldest inhabitant instructing a newly arrived immigrant. Two portly male parents, one evidently belonging to the girl Philippa was so much interested in, the other to the sisters, tried to monopolize all of Madame's time and turned to Mademoiselle Mimi when Madame's ear was not available. Philippa resented this, for she had a question a minute that she wanted to put to Mademoiselle, and the girl, Effie White, on Philippa's left, seemed to her the stiffest girl she had ever seen, apparently convinced that it was according to the most exacting social code to consume a substantial meal in unsociable silence.

Mademoiselle, somewhat to Philippa's surprise, proved that she could “remember her dignity.” Her red lips seriously composed, her bright eyes void of a flash of fun, her very

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hair with some of the curl disciplined out of it, Mademoiselle was not a bad copy of a demure and desiccated school-teacher. In an elderly fashion she contrived to make Philippa feel at home, telling her the French names of the articles used in the table service, of the food, and the formulas of table courtesies. Mademoiselle, like her mother, ate with an almost miraculous daintiness. Moreover, Philippa's eyes opened wide to see Mademoiselle leave untouched the dessert, which was delicately delicious, with the greatest possible indifference while she conducted a conversation with a bluff and portly male parent who objected to the rather limited number of studies taught. When, however, the gentleman turned to his daughter and Mademoiselle had a moment to herself, she instantly turned to her dessert. At the first mouthful her eyes met Philippa's and she smiled in mischievous fellowship in the weaknesses of the flesh. Philippa then knew that little Mademoiselle had not eliminated all of her human qualities in an hour.

The first moment she could catch Mademoiselle's attention, Philippa questioned her.

"Please tell me who that girl is—over there

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in the good-looking dress—more what a married woman would wear ——”

Mademoiselle smiled at Philippa's description.

“That is Helen Odell. Her father is one of the richest men in Montreal, a banker. She is the only child.”

“But is she going to be here? *At school?*”

“Yes. She was graduated last June but they decided to send her back as a sort of special student.”

“She doesn't seem very enthusiastic,” said Philippa shrewdly, before she realized that what she said wasn't very polite. “Oh, I beg your pardon.” She blushed a little. She seemed to be often finding herself embarrassed and self-conscious here, something that had not often happened to her before. “I just meant that she seems—different somehow. I can't help wondering about her. You wouldn't think of her as a schoolgirl exactly.” She was naturally eaten up with curiosity about the episode of the morning. “But nobody has said anything about her being engaged or anything,” she thought. “I don't believe it would be quite nice to say anything about the man.”

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Mademoiselle had turned and was surveying Philippa with interest.

"*Tiens*, you have the ideas, *ma petite*." Then she thought a minute. "I hope you won't be lonesome here."

"Why. What do you mean? I don't get lonesome?"

"I wonder whether the girls who will be your schoolmates will be always companionable. They are different from you, these English-Canadian girls and ——" Mademoiselle looked around the table with her funny air of playful conspiracy—"different sometimes from me. It is not because they are not of my own race. We had many friends among English people before we came to this country, *maman* and I. But these, as I said, are more English than the English."

"But can't you tell me about Miss Odell?"

"——No," Mademoiselle said finally, after thought. "I think not. Best to have you find out things for yourself—or have *maman* tell you. She is the only perfect one," she finished with an adoring smile. "But now you must get acquainted with your neighbor."

As Effie White's flow of conversation stopped after she had asked Philippa whether

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she lived in Washington where the President lived, or in New York, and Philippa's eager questions died on her lips as she encountered Effie's round eyes, she waited for another moment when Mademoiselle would have a respite from the educational ideas of the substantial male parent of Effie.

"Mademoiselle, do you know who the young man was whom I met to-day at an old house by a little river and with a funny old church near it?"

"A young man, you say?"

("What pink, *pink* cheeks Mademoiselle has. I wonder how old she is?") — "Yes, Mademoiselle, a rather fair young man with his arm in a sling. And what is the name of the place? He seemed to know all about the 'Seigneurs,' the Cuthberts. And how did there come to be 'Seigneurs' at all in this country."

"That is the old Lanoraie Manor House. The first Cuthbert built it after he bought the seigniory of 'Sieur Louis Mort de la Maraye'; the name Lanoraie, you see, is a corrupt form of 'de la Noraye.' The officers in the Carignan Regiment, which was a crack regiment, veterans of many wars sent out to New France to

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protect the colonists from the Indians, were given, when the regiment was disbanded, tracts of land along the St. Lawrence in return for their services and were called the 'Seigneurs' of these tracts. Their tenants paid the 'Seigneurs', besides the stated sum of money, certain other dues. It was, in a small way, the feudal system transplanted to the New World."

"Then, when the English won the French and Indian War, it was these 'Seigneurs' whose lands the English officers bought?"

"Yes, and the English owners kept the title."

"How thrilling! And did their tenants owe them feudal homage, too? How many interesting things you have here!"

"'Homage' was translated into 'rent,' Mademoiselle said, laughing. "Which is far more to the point in these sordid days—you see, I must always be the teacher. But—how did it happen that he spoke to you? You are far from home and in our care. And it is perhaps not always wise to ——"

"Oh, I wouldn't have spoken to him if I hadn't seen he was all right," said Philippa with what seemed like surprising nonchalance to Mademoiselle Mimi. "I just had to know

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all about it. And it was interesting having him show me things!" ("She looks as if she were hungry to hear something"), Philippa was thinking. ("But it did seem odd that he spoke of Madame as if she didn't like him. I can't imagine Madame not liking anybody as attractive as he seemed.")

Mademoiselle was no longer pink; she was pale. The loss of her color did something to her face ——

"I wonder if perhaps she doesn't feel as happy sometimes as she seems," Philippa thought.

Mademoiselle did not speak again for some moments.

"You made no mistake, my little Phileépa; it was quite safe for you to talk to that gentleman. It was, I am sure, Mr. Ross Cuthbert, who is the last of his name. He is still called the 'Seigneur' by the French-Canadians because he owns some small part of the land that belonged to his ancestors, and they pay him the rent. He has not been home long from the war. But ——" She looked irresolutely toward where her mother sat at the head of the table. "I think there is no reason why you should speak to my mother about this

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meeting. It is not that she would blame you. But it is that she does not completely like that young man. To speak of him might give her pain. That is what I think most of—not to give my mother pain.”

With an effort that was evident to Philippa’s sharp eyes, she managed a pale little smile. But she dismayed Philippa by adding:

“At dinner this evening we will begin to speak French at the table.”

CHAPTER IV

ALL that afternoon and the next day the girls were arriving. Kind as Madame and Mademoiselle were, they could not, of course, find much time to give Philippa. In the stir and commotion, in fact, Philippa often felt so much in the way that she assumed a more or less apologetic air and finally crept back to her own room.

She had looked forward with eagerness to the arrival of the girls who were to be her associates for almost a year; her head, as has been said, was full of stories of boarding-school pranks, of "midnight spreads," of delicious cozy moments of confidences over fudge or a box of candy from home or olives harpooned by a hatpin, of wistful longing for the immediate friendship of these unknown girls—being unknown, they had a different radiance from the friends of many years. She had confidently expected that, after the way

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things would have happened at home, chance meetings in the hall, the loan of a curling iron or tooth paste, would lead to fast friendships.

But nothing of the sort happened. Early in the afternoon she was coming out of her room when she heard through a half-closed door a newly arrived girl, Margaret Dixon, wondering helplessly when the man would bring her trunk up. As Philippa would have done in such a case at home, she knocked at the door. When the door was opened a rather clumsily dressed girl stood there. She was short and stockily built, with two massive braids of hair down her back. She was rather plain-looking and even unattractive, yet she stared at Philippa in apparently haughty surprise that she should have come to her room. Philippa felt her face growing hot, but she would not let her embarrassment prevent her from doing what she had intended to do.

"I heard you asking about your trunk," she said, in a tone that, in spite of her efforts, grew icier as she proceeded; the blank stare on the girl's face was distinctly chilling to ardor. "My room is at the back of the house, and I heard a wagon drive up a minute ago. And some one—I think it was Mademoiselle—

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spoke your name. I'm quite sure there were trunks on the wagon. So I suppose yours will be brought up soon."

"Oh," said the girl, still staring.

"I—I thought you would be interested to know."

"Oh," said the girl again. Then, after a moment of apparent indecision, "Thank you."

CHAPTER V

“*T*HE ill-bred stupid thing!” Philippa stormed to herself. She stood with her back against the closed door as if to keep a houseful of enemies out from the one place she could call her own. “I’d just like to let her know what the girls at home would think of her. She’d be left alone good and plenty. Why, if any one had taken the trouble to be as nice to me as I was to her—I thought she’d like to know her trunk had come—I’d be so grateful. And I’d have manners enough to show it, too, instead of acting as if somebody was trying to push in where she were not wanted.”

The refuge from what she felt were either curious eyes or unfriendly or—perhaps worse than either—indifferent eyes all about her was only momentarily soothing. She lighted her lamp, took up a book that she had thought she wanted to read, put on her dressing gown

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and slippers and sat down for what ought to have been a peaceful evening. As she looked about on the cool gray walls of her room she shivered. They seemed a kind of visible loneliness closing in on her. There was a stubborn strength in Philippa, so she fought against depression. Her mother had warned her that she might be homesick and she had laughed at the idea. Now her pride came to her aid.

"It's not that—that I'm *lonesome*," she assured herself, straining her ears all the time to hear sounds that would tell her that other people were talking and laughing together quite as she did with the girls at home. But when she heard little bursts of talk and laughter she was hurt all the more.

She found all at once that her eyes were wet.

"This won't do!" Philippa spoke fiercely, starting up. At home Philippa was noted for being always ecstatically up or violently down. She had learned, when she felt one of her "downs" coming on, that it was fatal to think about herself, that the only thing to do was immediately to throw herself wholeheartedly into some outside interest.

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"But there isn't anything interesting here to do—and—and I don't know *anybody* who cares a thing for me except Madame and Mademoiselle, and the last time I spoke to Madame I know I bothered her. And—and Mother's gone——" She was struggling hard with the flood of tears that were rising just back of her eyeballs. "And—I'm *blest* if I try the 'do-something-for-others' line here or speak to one of those girls without an introduction—or even speak first at *all*, if that's the way they are going to act. Oh, *why* did I decide to stay here! It was just because I imagined all sorts of things that are never going to be. It's going to be *awful*!"

By this time Philippa was staring straight ahead of her, making a terrible face to push back the tears, even gripping her hands until the nails dug into the soft palms. All around her was a dark, hopeless emptiness. There never would be anything else. There never could be. She could not picture ever going home again. "I'd hate to write to Mother that I can't stay. I'd be ashamed to. So I'll have to stay. But I can't stay—I can't help it—I can't wait to write. I'll wire—— No, I must not be such a fool."

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It did seem as if she were the only living being in that house that was not friendly with somebody. Even clumsy, red-armed Angelique, who did the coarsest and roughest work in the house, was having a boisterous conversation with her cousin, the carter. Philippa resolutely opened the book and was really getting so interested in it that she had forgotten for the moment where she was when her eyes fell on the little desk calendar her mother had remembered to provide.

"Friday evening!" All at once the tears welled to her eyes—to think of what this Friday evening would have been at home—Anne 'n' Virginia and herself in the living room making fudge—a wood fire if it was cold enough to make it comfortable—all the things they would have to talk about—what teachers they would have—probably she'd hear that they had drawn Miss Morton in English—who had gone out for basketball—dramatics—all the wonderfulness of the first Friday evening after school had begun—the *darling* living room at home with Father 'n' Mother looking in on them—so glad they were happy ——"

"I'm *not* homesick. I'm not the homesick

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kind," she whispered to herself, biting her lips fiercely. "My crazy imagination making it all seem so romantic and exciting—a French school—winter sports—fun with the girls—*'Fun!'*" she repeated fiercely. "As if anyone could have any fun with these girls. Half the time they stare at me like dumb-bells at the simplest things I say. They haven't a particle of imagination. Madame is little and cunning with her little quick ways of moving her head like a bird—and Mademoiselle is dear—it seemed like a story. But Madame's so high up above you, somehow she *can't* care—not the way Mother —— But, of course, nobody could care the way Mother would—Oh, what a *fool* I was ——" Her chin was quivering now and the tears raining down. "Nobody wants me with them—that girl across the hall would rather not have me where she is—I *don't make any difference to a single soul in this house ——*"

She was crying piteously now, shaken with great sobs.

"I don't want to cry—I won't!" As if she felt herself drowning her hands unconsciously groped in the air for the straw that would hold her up. "I'll show that I've cried to-

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morrow and that girl will know." The fierce dislike that the thought conjured up helped her where nothing else could. She stopped weeping and mopped her eyes—even turned to the book. Then her eyes fell on the little etching that her mother had bought for her in Montreal because it made them both think of their own little bit of the brook at home, the sheltering slope of their own roof. That brought her down helplessly. There was no dear comforting home to go to—nothing. Throwing herself on the bed and half smothering herself with the pillow over her head so that the girl across the hall wouldn't hear, she sobbed and raged herself into blind, aching, shaking misery —

There came a tap at the door. She wouldn't answer. Perhaps she couldn't. The door opened. The light step warned her that it was Madame. She tried to sit up, to push the wet hair out of her eyes. But she fell back, sobbing with fresh violence.

"Oh, *cherie, cherie*," said Madam's voice, soft and human now—almost like Mother's. "I know you cannot help to cry. 'All hope gone,' you say. Even though you will know

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in a little that is not so you cannot see it now. So now weep it all away. And cry out. When you are young it does not hurt to weep—not much. But bend, dear child, with the storm. Do not contend with it. Do not be angry and hate others. It is that that hurts. And I will sit here and be with you to the end of the storm ——”

She was stroking the hot head all the time, and, quite as if her fingers had hypnotic power, the shaking was ceasing. Blindly Philippa put out a hand and touched hers.

“So,” said the soft voice, “the storm passes—another storm.”

Philippa held the hand close to her cheek.

“But, Madame,” she said at last, without daring to look up but able to talk almost calmly, “I don’t believe I can stay. You understand. You know it isn’t ——”

Madame knew that the tears would break through again if she didn’t find the right thing to say. She went on stroking the flushed cheek for a time in silence, her mouth making a little soft round of perplexity.

“If it is too hard you must not stay,” she said at last with soothing common sense.

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"This is in truth the Château de Liberté, as your own mother named it. If you stay it must be because you yourself want to taste what life here can offer you. The mail, the telegraph, the railroad are at your service. If you have not enough money in your pocket to make the trip your mother has placed more in my care. One does not turn one's fifteen-year-old daughter adrift without mooring a liferaft safe at hand." She smiled a little to herself as she went on stroking the hair back from the babishly round cheek.

"The door, then, is open for your flight. But ——" Her tone altered to a cool reasonableness, kind but dispassionate. "It is, perhaps, a confession of too great impulsiveness to act instantly on an emotion. Three days ago—this morning even—you and your mother both thought you had made a wise decision. It is possible that nothing has changed since then but your own feeling. If I were you—*ma petite* I speak to you as I wish there had been some friend to speak to myself once. Why not wait to see what the next days may bring? Then, having seen, act, but with a cool head. If that is too much

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to expect—but I do not think it is—the latch-string of the Château de Liberté is *in* as well as *out*. Mimi and I will help you on your way.”

Soothed and calmed, Philippa could send Madame a surprisingly clear glance, although it was from her poor swollen eyes.

“Thank you, Madame, I think I can wait.”

“I, too, will wait now until you raise your face and smile. Your smile—so bright and sweet like that of your mother in a time hard for me—does good to me and Mimi.”

It was not long after Madame’s light step had died away before the bell that meant “all lights out” rang. It found Philippa in a comfortably drowsy state. But questions floated through her mind. Madame had suggested that while she waited to decide, and since there was no school until Monday, she go to see an old friend of her mother’s, Mrs. Cherton. She wondered if that would be interesting.

“I wonder if I will stay—such good times at home—I wonder—what was the funny way Madame said it?—I wonder if the latch-string is really in? Are there times when

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you can't do things even if you know you can? That sounds silly—how about her—that Helen Odell? Is she staying here because she wants to?—I wonder how much liberty we have anyway—any of us—I wonder if Mademoiselle? ——”

CHAPTER VI

IT was unfortunate that the next morning the rain poured in torrents. At breakfast Philippa felt Madame's inquiring eyes upon her.

"I suppose she's wondering whether I'm going have a relapse," she thought. "It is odd how she seems to feel everything, and yet is so far away up above us. It's just as if she were a wireless station. Well, I'll just let her know I'm going to have a beautiful time." And before her courage failed she launched two laborious French sentences at Madame:

"J'aime marcher dans la pluie, Madame. Je vais aller chez Madame Cherton."

And Madame's mouth made a soft O of reassurance.

When Philippa reached her destination, the little old gray stone house in the pelting rain was silent and withdrawn to the point of isolation. The tiniest bit of lawn fenced in

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by a very high box hedge soaked in the wet. It was a flat, gloomy front that presented itself; green window shades exactly drawn just below the casing of the top panes; below that several layers, apparently of limp white curtain material, shrouded the window. Philippa went up the two steps of the forbidding gray stone porch with benches on the side which nobody could conceive of anyone's ever wanting to sit on.

"Oh, there's the knocker Mother told me about!" thought Philippa, gleefully. "I do believe everything is going to happen just as she said it would."

She gave a rap with the ugly iron knocker. The reverberations of that rap rang apparently through an empty house. A miniature cascade gushed from a broken gutter at the corner of the porch. The reverberations of the sound died away.

"I don't believe there's anybody in the house," thought Philippa.

But just at that moment steps were heard—slow steps, but with no hint of weakness or indecision. The door opened. A gray-haired, black-clad woman stood within its frame. She was very tall and, though she

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was somewhat stooped, bowed as though some supernatural force had pulled her earthward, not her own sagging muscles.

It was odd that there could be anything in Mrs. Cherton's drooping black presence to cheer Philippa or that her "So you're Margaret Fenwick's daughter—Gale's the name, eh-h-h? And you've come to see me?" should sound distinctly flattering. But it was so. Whether it was the smile at the corner of the lips or the eager hands that drew her inside and unfastened her dripping raincoat, Philippa understood that she was more than welcome. And that thought warmed her through and through.

With a tremulous eagerness that belied her cool words Mrs. Cherton turned and led the way into a little room at the side of the entrance hall. It was certainly the barest and poorest apartment that ever was called a "drawing room." Somehow, its scanty furniture, its shrunken bits of carpet, the exquisite neatness, the chill that even the bright coal fire in the grate could not dissipate, the crocheted doilies that protected backs and arms of the two overstuffed chairs and the

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sofa, all spelled "widow" to Philippa quite as much as the black dress and the hard, glittering black chain that guarded the watch tucked into Mrs. Cherton's belt.

"Oh, please, just let me go around with you and do the things you would do," said Philippa, impulsively. And that seemed to please Mrs. Cherton.

"You can spend the day, then?" she asked, eagerly. "That's just like your mother. Do you know you're just like her at your age, eh-h-h?" Philippa thought she had never heard anything so long drawn out and melancholy as that "eh," and yet there was something cozy about it.

She trotted around very happily after Mrs. Cherton, helping her to make beds, dust rooms, and sort over bed linen. For Mrs. Cherton was getting her house ready for the small invasion of "paying guests" that usually accompanied the opening of the Château and the Boys' School. Sometimes, she told Philippa, she even lodged some boy for a short time, while he was waiting for an expected vacancy at the school.

"I should think it would be a great nuisance," said Philippa, whose attitude toward

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boys at that time was apt to be superior where it was not censorious.

"You wouldn't think I'd enjoy it now, would you, eh-h-h?" was Mrs. Cherton's unexpected answer.

When it became necessary for Mrs. Cherton to go out to do her Saturday marketing, she hesitated about the disposal of Philippa. Finally she said:

"I'm wondering whether you wouldn't like to stay up in the attic until I come back, eh-h-h?"

Rather naturally Philippa looked at her in some surprise.

"You haven't seen my attic, have you, eh-h-h? If I can recall the way I felt when I was your age, I used to think the sound of rain on the attic roof was comfortable." Her sad tone did not agree with the smile in her eyes, which seemed to promise pleasures that, at first thought, sojourning in an attic would never have suggested. "There are some old books up there you might like to look over, just to see what kind of books we used to read. You can have an indoor picnic, eh-h-h?"

Philippa followed Mrs. Cherton to the

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attic. At the top of the ladderlike steps Philippa emitted a "Gosh!" of surprise. Although she saved herself from saying so, the attic was really the most attractive place in the house, she thought. It extended over the whole top of the house, and the dormer windows seemed to divide it into little separate apartments, each one of which promised all sorts of surprises.

"Furniture, books, clothes." Mrs. Cherton, with three waves of the hand, indicated the respective compartments. "I'm thinking I'll see which one you'll go to first." As, before she had finished speaking, Philippa had already darted for the old trunks and boxes that contained the clothes of bygone days, Mrs. Cherton smiled her drooping smile, whose apparent sadness did not conceal a good deal of quiet amusement.

"How in the world can anyone be so orderly?" was Philippa's first thought as she surveyed the neatly wrapped and tied and labeled bundles in the first trunk she opened. "Oh dear! I wish Anne 'n' Virginia were here!" We could dress up and have more fun acting plays." She had begun to unearth the most deliciously funny stiff old dresses. "But

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how in the world could people ever wear such things? This skirt weighs twenty pounds at the very least. Look at all that heavy lining! And the funny seams all down the back of the waist. It looks as if they cut cloth up just for the pleasure of sewing it up again. And those high stiff collars; I don't see how they could move their heads. It must have been torture! And Muzz says our clothes now are so eccentric—when she wore things like that! This must have been a very grand party dress. I suppose it must have been white once—I wonder if it could have been a wedding dress? There's all that pearl trimming—and the train must be yards and yards. I'll ask Mrs. Cherton about it. Gosh! but it seems funny to think of her being married—or, rather, it would have seemed funny when I first saw her. I've heard about those great humps in the dresses at the back. Bustles, they called them; Mother told me about them and how, when hers wasn't large enough, she pleated stiff paper and fastened it on. But, oh, I didn't know people ever wore hats like that! It's a peanut. There's a looking glass; I'll try it on." Alone as she was, Philippa burst into a peal of laughter when she saw herself.

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It really was a pity there was nobody to hear it, for it was delicious laughter. "I wonder if it ought to be turned around? No, it must have been worn like that, tipping down on the forehead; it doesn't fit any other way. I wouldn't have been caught dead with that hat on my head. I certainly am glad I live *now*. Think of that hat compared with my darling brown duvetyn!

When Mrs. Cherton came up with an attractive luncheon tray which contained, among other things, some amazingly good strawberry jam, she found Philippa half buried in a cozy nest of old comforts that she had pulled from a cedar chest. On one side of her was a curious assortment of objects, and on the other a number of old paper-back novels, little pamphlets, dilapidated books with broken board covers.

As soon as she saw Mrs. Cherton she burst out eagerly:

"Oh, there are just heaps and heaps of things I want you to tell me about. I just can't wait, I really can't. This is a man's silk hat, but it certainly must have been too small for any man's head, and there's an elastic

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band that must have been to hold it on, and I never heard of any man wearing one. And *what* are these things for? These queer black-broadcloth trousers must have been worn by a woman; they're long like a man's, only they taper off so at the foot they'd look too silly on any man. And *what* kind of a skirt is this, all hunched up on one side? And such a stiff waist! It's like corsets all the way up, with that fearful high collar—it's like *iron*—and buttons all down the front! It's a *scream*! And there's this darling little riding whip with a red handle. And where did you get this black lace thing? What is that kind of stone in the whip? And *who* in the world ever read these books, *The Pious Boot-black of Flinchley Common*. The very name would make you die of laughing. Did anyone ever take things like that *seriously*? And here's the funniest book, so lackadaisical and proper, and yet it's exciting, too. I was just reading it while I was waiting for you. And ——"

"Now you'd better just eat your lunch, child," said Mrs. Cherton, laughing and laughing heartily. "Your tea will get cold."

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"Oh, I can't wait. That's the *best*-looking cake. What kind is it?"

"Plum cake—English plum cake. They'll have it to-day at almost every tea table in England—only not so good as mine. It's still hot. I made it just for you."

"Plum cake! But those aren't plums; they're raisins. But I can't wait now to hear about it. I'm so hungry. Oh, do let's sit down here. You take the chair. I'm perfectly comfortable on this box. The trunk makes a fine table. I'm starved. This is the nicest picnic I ever went to. Isn't the rain on the roof cozy? I wonder if I'm wicked because it makes me feel cozier to think I'm under cover and other people are out in the rain. I know there are stories and stories in this attic. Won't you please—pretty-please—tell me about the riding whip? I thought people used crops. But I'm selfish. You *must* eat your lunch before you tell me anything. What?"

"Now how in the world do you ever expect me to remember all your questions, eh-h-h? Oh yes, I'll drink some tea and eat some bread and butter. Now, will you eat your lunch? I'll do all the talking. What do you want to

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know first, about books or clothes? I'll probably give out before I answer all your questions."

Philippa, her mouth full of jam and bread, motioned toward the silk hat.

"I thought so," said Mrs. Cherton, with severity. "This is a light-minded generation, interested only in transitory vanities, isn't it, eh-h-h? The silk hat, young lady, was worn by me when I was a girl in England. In India I usually wore a linen habit with a broad-brimmed hat, of course."

"*In India?*" A piece of plum cake suspended on its way to her mouth, Philippa stared in amazement.

"Yes. I didn't come to the Colony—to Canada until long after I was married. I ——"

"What I really want, Mrs. Cherton," said Philippa, with shining eyes, "is the whole story of your life." The dim corners of the attic, the cozy plip-plop of the rain on the roof so short a space above her head, the slanting lines of rain whose crystal bars seemed to fence them in and the hardships of the world out, the homely comfort of good food to a hungry appetite, all this cast a pleasant spell

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over Philippa. Mrs. Cherton was no longer a rather dreary-looking person in perpetual black; she was clad in the radiant colors of the imagination; she carried the wand that could transform everything. For one wave of it would bring to the dusky attic Romance.

CHAPTER VII

I *LIVED* in Kent, England, when I was a girl, said Mrs. Cherton, her eyes on the long lines of rain. The spell of the day was over her, too. Philippa's bright eager eyes, the sympathy in the mobile red lips, were keys to unlock the most rigidly guarded confidences. As Mrs. Cherton spoke she held the little riding whip in her hands—and held it tenderly. "Ours was a county family, no title, but proud because there had been Buxtons of Barcombe long before any of the titles we knew had been given. There were five girls of us and one boy. He was the youngest, but, of course, he was the heir. And as the entail had been broken and diverted away from our family on much of the original estate, and as Eton and Oxford for Walter cost a great deal, we girls had to be content with rather inferior governesses much of the time, and our dressing allowances were too small to turn us out decently."

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"But I think that's queer. My father 'n' mother say that it is just as important for girls to be well educated as boys. And if there isn't enough money to go around, there are many more ways for boys to go out and earn part of their college expenses than for girls. And it's good training for them, too. Bayard always has ——"

Mrs. Cherton smiled faintly:

"That wasn't the way in England, then, and isn't now, either. There wasn't any way for any of us to make any money that wouldn't have been a disgrace to the family. All the money is spent on the heir and the girls have to get along the best way they can ——"

"But Daddy says that's such bad economy," said Philippa, eagerly. "Girls as well as boys ought to be provided with a profession, something they can do well. I'm going in for commercial art—advertising—probably."

"But the only thing we girls were supposed to do was to get married. The only money that was ever spent on us, except for the barest necessities, was for our season in London. And I never even had my season, because I was nearest in age to Walter and the year I should have gone his chambers at Christ

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Church, Oxford, had to be fitted up and that took all the money. And the next turn was Gwenn's. So they married me to the first man who asked for me."

"Oh, but you loved him, of course?" Philippa stopped eating, a piece of plum cake in her hand, to ask this with round eyes. "And he must have been nice. They wouldn't have let you if he hadn't been. Mother says that Daddy's first impulse is to shoot anyone he thinks is in love with Doreen."

Mrs. Cherton smiled faintly. But she kept her eyes turned away.

"They thought it a very good match for me," she said, guardedly. "I was lucky to have an offer at all, since I wouldn't have any portion to speak of and wasn't a dashing beauty like Gwenn. Of course, I had to marry before she came out, for men wouldn't look at me after they had seen her. And—perhaps my father didn't know some of the things. Oh well, I was very well pleased to marry and go out to India; it seemed almost as much a fairy tale to me as it does to you. But before we sailed I was presented at court, 'on my marriage,' as we say. That was when I wore that dress with the long train; it was white

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then. And it *was* delightful for a time. English army posts are very good to a bride coming out. There are so many more men than women, you see. So—I had my gay time. And that was when I rode in a linen habit—sometimes in the black one, too, up in the hills. And the silk hat was the proper thing to wear with a cloth habit, and very smart we looked, too, though it seems odd enough to you. The queer shape of the skirt is because it had to fit over the right knee, riding side saddle. The riding whip was given me by the wife of the governor-general. She was a great friend of mine. The handle is carnelian and ivory. Carnelian was often cut as a gem when I was young. So it was all very gay and happy for a time.”

“Oh dear! Aren’t you going to tell any more? I wanted to hear all about elephant hunts and conjurers and everything. Why wasn’t it gay *all* the time?”

“Because my husband had to sell out. He wasn’t very—prudent and he had a racing stable and bet wildly and—lost money in other ways. So we had to go.”

“But couldn’t you have stayed and lived economically on his income?” Philippa was

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full of dismay at this sad ending of her fairy tale.

"The salary of an English army officer wouldn't have kept my husband in riding boots," Mrs. Cherton said, wearily. "Even now a man has to be a colonel before he receives what a girl stenographer is paid in the States. An army officer is supposed to have an income. I found that my husband's estates were all in the hands of the money lenders. So—there was nothing to do but sell out. He had no training that would fit him for anything on the Civil List. We had to start all over in some other place.

"First, my husband went to Central America. A revolution was brewing there, and he was commissioned to train their army of the revolutionists. He did it well, too. The revolution was victorious and we were very grand for a time, lived in a wonderful old Spanish palace with a lovely fountain in the patio, and I received at all the state functions with the president's wife. It was all very funny, for the women were kept in their houses like odalisques in a harem and they didn't have any more sense than an American child of ten—not so much. And half of the

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leading officials were part negro. So—along came another revolution and we had to escape between sunset and dawn. We had a frightful time of it, getting away, because they never had paid my husband all the money he was supposed to have and everybody had to be bribed to do the slightest thing for us. But I sold all my jewelry that was left and we got away. But *that* was when I found this black lace mantilla convenient to hide my face with."

"And then—?" Philippa wouldn't let her stop.

"We came to Canada because an old friend of my husband's was head master in the boys' school here and offered to make him a master. After he died I stayed on here. And that's all. Some of the boys they send me are nice little fellows, almost as a boy of my own might have been. They write to me sometimes. Now is there anything else you want to ask me about?"

"This little white slipper. Could you *ever* get that on? I've tried and tried and I can't even get my toes in it."

"I wore that when I was married and when I was presented. I did have a rather small

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foot for an English girl. But it was larger than most of my friends from the States and enormous beside the feet of the Central American women. But my feet are two or three sizes larger now."

"Oh dear! If my feet are two or three sizes larger when I'm as old as you what *will* I do!" Philippa wailed, disconsolately. "All the girls have bigger feet than their mothers had. It's awful."

Mrs. Cherton hastened to divert her:

"You haven't asked me about the books yet, or the furniture. You'll have to hurry up. I must go and see about my jam on the stove. The boys eat tons of it."

Philippa looked at her a little uncertainly. She didn't quite know how Mrs. Cherton would take her question.

"I did want to know whether you really ever liked those books, *The Pious Bootblack of Flinchley Common*, and all."

Mrs. Cherton tried to keep a very grave face.

"Don't you think they are nice, moral stories?" she asked, noncommittally.

"Well—maybe I haven't been brought up to just that kind of religion," faltered Phil-

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ippa, feeling that she had probably committed a frightful breach of courtesy in seeming to cast aspersions on her hostess's taste.

Then Mrs. Cherton laughed outright, the first merry laugh that Philippa had heard from her. It took twenty years from her age.

"My dear, one of my sisters sent me those tracts. She is quite the richest of the family—and the most pious. Once, when I was in sore straits for money, I wrote her, asking for a loan. She wrote back that she had none she could spare, advised me to seek comfort from Above. And with the letter came those remarkable compositions. I don't believe tracts are published in these days. I hope not. It was then that I realized that families seemed to think there was an invariable connection between bad morals and need of money. I must admit I never read the things. But I kept them, in a not very pleasant spirit, I'm afraid. They reminded me—not to expect certain things."

"But that was dreadful of her." Philippa looked deeply mortified. "And what *did* you do?"

There was a lovely smile on Mrs. Cherton's worn face.

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"An old servant of mine, who had been with me through many trying times, brought to me the sum I needed, almost all her savings. I took the money and thanked God, quite as devoutly as James or Peter or whatever the objectionable little bootblack's name was could possibly have done. But what I thanked God for was that I was saved from being bitter."

"Mother says I'm always so annoying because I always want to know more about every story she tells me. But what happened to the old servant?"

"She calls herself my old servant still, although it is many months since she has been able to do any work. She lives in my nice comfortable kitchen and her own warm room. And sometimes, when we're very grand, she puts on a marvelous white cap and apron and totters to open the door for a guest. She feels that the position of her Mistress is thereby saved. And now I must be going. Aren't you tired of the attic yet?"

"No, I think I'll stay and read this book. It's silly and the heroine is always fainting at things. And the hero weeps sometimes—a *man* crying. It's awfully funny and old-fashioned. But it is exciting, all the same.

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Some other time I'm going to ask you about the queer old furniture."

"I fancy I'll be bringing some of the queer old furniture down." Mrs. Cherton gave a keen glance around the collection of dusty wooden headboards and battered washstands. "I'm going to have an extra boy here for a few days until they can fit him in at the school, and I'll have to put another bed in the big southeast room. By the way, it's an American boy whom your mother seems to know. Perhaps you have heard something about it, eh-h-h?" She looked at Philippa over her eyeglasses with rather a quizzical smile.

"No. Who is it?" Philippa was on fire with excitement in a minute. Anybody from home would be thrilling.

"The name—what is that name, now? Reminds me of something in your United States History. Ran—no—yes, it *is* Randolph ——"

"Not Jeff—it can't be Jeff? What in the world —— *is* it Jeff Randolph? It just simply can't be! oh, *please* let me know right away! That would be too wonderful!"

Mrs. Cherton made a great show of effort, lifting up her decent black dress skirt to dis-

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close an equally decent black silk petticoat which apparently harbored a pocket. In the pocket was a piece of flimsy yellow paper. She unfolded it and, maddeningly, scanned it.

"Yes, it *is* Randolph," she said, finally. "And now that I think of it, your mother says, 'Tell Philippa.' I do hope he is a nice boy and won't give me or the school any trouble. But, being an American ——" she ended by shaking her head solemnly.

But Philippa was ready for her. She felt she had shown far more enthusiasm than she should have done over a mere boy. If it had been Anne or Virginia she couldn't have appeared more excited, she told herself. She hated to show any eagerness about a boy; it was during the last year that she had become sensitive on the subject. She had always prided herself on not being silly. Perhaps being so glad that Jeff was coming was being silly.

"I must have seemed simply mushy," she thought. So she assumed a negligent expression of countenance.

"Oh dear! I was afraid it might be Jeff. I only hope he won't try to tag around all the time."

CHAPTER VIII

ON her first Monday morning at the Château, Philippa was rudely awakened by some alarming concussion of sound that sent her out of bed with a conviction that the war had been suddenly renewed, shifted to Canada, and that the house she was in was being bombed. A cold gray light had sifted through the window into her room. After a moment of utter bewilderment thought came to her and she took the little traveling clock that her mother had given her to the window.

"Half-past six!" she said, out loud. "I thought it must be three in the morning." A glance out of the window gave her the explanation. "Oh, it's going to be a miserable rainy day!" she thought. The tears that welled into her eyes seemed surprising to Philippa herself. She had gone to bed feeling quite cheerful.

Stumbling about the unfamiliar little room,

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she tried to bathe and dress. In that dismal gray light it seemed impossible that she could ever learn to get along without her half or third share in a bathroom in the morning. Madame had explained the night before that, as the house was old-fashioned and had one bathroom only on each floor, a regular schedule would have to be arranged by which each girl should have the bath a certain number of times a week. In the morning a cold sponge bath in the rooms must serve.

"I just never will get used to it," grumbled Philippa, splashing water over the floor and being generally clumsy. "It's like taking a bath in a *saucer*." Not being accustomed to doing things by schedule, knowing that breakfast was at half-past seven and that promptness was insisted on, she felt nervously driven.

"I suppose I might as well put on the school uniform," she grumbled again. "I think a uniform is the silliest thing, anyway."

But when she was dressed in the plain blue serge dress held in only by a loose belt and with plain white collar, her hair fluffed out and her eyes bright and cheeks glowing from cold water and haste, she couldn't help feeling that the picture the looking glass showed her

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wasn't an unattractive one at all. That made her more cheerful. She had some minutes to wait before the breakfast gong would sound.

"I wonder if any of the girls will be down as early as this; I'd like to get acquainted." But a most unusual shyness held her; she hadn't forgotten her encounter with the girl with the two heavy black braids in the room opposite. So she sat down and tried to read a little instead of running any risks.

Breakfast didn't go very well. Mademoiselle had been moved to the other table, for some reason, and her place next Philippa was filled by the stiff girl. That was a blow! Madame was so occupied pouring coffee and seeing that everyone was served that Philippa couldn't catch her eye. Madame's little mouth was compressed anxiously as she directed the awkward young girl who, all angles and unintelligent bustle, was almost purple from embarrassment. The stiff girl returned Philippa's "good-morning" perfunctorily, but seemed to feel no longing for any further conversation. As Effie White, for some reason, did not come to breakfast that morning, and Philippa was determined to initiate no more conversations with the neighbor on her right,

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she seemed condemned to silence and isolation. She had been served with toast and no butter, with coffee, but with neither cream nor sugar. She had known the phrases by which she should ask for those very necessary things, but all of her French evaporated in the uncongenial atmosphere. She sat for some minutes, seeing coffee and toast growing cold before her eyes before she could nerve herself to speak. She had to speak in English.

"You're breaking the rule; English isn't spoken," said the girl on her right with virtuous disapproval, as she passed cream and sugar and butter.

Philippa couldn't help the retort:

"You broke it yourself telling me I did," she flashed out, laughing a bit because, after all, it *was* funny.

Her neighbor favored her with an ungracious stare:

"Just like a pushing American to say that."

Philippa, with cheeks scarlet—she would have been puzzled to know whether it was from anger or from embarrassment—decided she would ask for nothing more under any consideration. She swallowed a few mouthfuls, and was so unhappy that each one nearly

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choked her. Since it was not permitted to leave the table until after Madame did, unless there was some very good reason, Philippa had to sit still while the girls all about her ate their way stolidly through a hearty breakfast. She could no more have addressed a request in French to Madame across that table of Canadian schoolgirls than she could have done the "human fly" act up the Washington monument. It was especially embarrassing, too, for if she lowered her eyes it was hard to prevent the tears from coming, and if she raised them she was apt to meet the eye of some girl who—her unhappy imagination made her believe—was as unfriendly as the girl next her seemed to be. It seemed hours before she could escape.

They assembled in the bare, austere school-room upstairs for morning prayers. Madame conducted the service. Her face diffused peace. As she read the Sermon on the Mount, all of Philippa's hurt and anger vanished. The hushed, reverent voice cast a spell. The songs were from a French hymnal which she had never seen; the airs were unfamiliar but very sweet. In the chorus Philippa was self-conscious about neither her

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French nor her voice, so, after a few quavering experimental strains, her clear sweet voice rose quite joyously with the rest. Then Madame, in tones that made one feel that she was really in communion with the Unseen, breathed a touchingly simple prayer of aspiration. After that, she spoke directly to the girls. Her few words of welcome and of explanation of the rules of the school, unassuming as words and manner were, carried an authority, complete and unquestioned. It was hard to explain this because of Madame's absolute simplicity—even humility. Philippa, a little awestruck, wondered:

“It's as if she herself had heard—Something Higher. It's that Something that must be obeyed. She doesn't care about herself.”

Soothed and heartened, Philippa went to her room for the straightening-up process that was to be part of the daily program; the girls were marked, she had learned, in neatness; that meant, their own personal tidiness, their table manners, the condition of their rooms and all their belongings. The mark for neatness was as important, it seemed, as the scholarship marks. That seemed an astounding thing.

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"Gosh! that 'll be hard on me," Philippa breathed to herself.

That first day, of course, could be little more than blocking out the studies for the year. It seemed extraordinary to Philippa that she was to have six French lessons a day: grammar, composition, prepared translation, sight translation, reading, conversation. But she did not question Madame's judgment. Perhaps that was because Madame said, with her faraway twinkle:

"You are thinking that you will grow to hate the French because you will be so bored. But I think not."

Besides the French, she was to have algebra, Canadian history, and English literature. In the preliminary classes where Madame and Mademoiselle—but what a different, dignified Mademoiselle—used French altogether in explaining the lessons, Philippa was amazed to find how well she understood, and astonished herself by getting out several sentences without stammering or halting. But she was mortified to find that she would be in class with the little girls in French, while she was with the older girls in the English subjects. And only one other girl, the one with the black

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braids, was advanced enough to be taking algebra!

"The translation we will wait a few days before beginning," said Madame, "until I dive to the depths of you and bring up all the French verbs I can find." And she wrinkled her small nose and laughed, her hushed little laugh. "Then we will put you in the class where you belong and advance you when you are beyond it."

"I'm sure I'll never get beyond it," said Philippa, with most unusual humility. "I feel so stupid here; none of the things that I know seem to count. If I keep up I'll be lucky."

"We will see," said Madame, noncommittally. But the way her eyes twinkled was encouraging.

The day passed quite briskly. Philippa, all through the meeting of the various classes, making acquaintance with the English teacher, lunch, a funny decorous walk in a long line, or girls walking two by two with Miss Shelby at the head, was so busy and so interested that she forgot to ask herself whether she was unhappy or not.

CHAPTER IX

A LETTER that came from Mrs. Gale Wednesday morning confirmed and explained the telegram. Senator Randolph, it seemed, expected to have to use all the Thanksgiving recess and the Christmas recess traveling. He was chairman on the Senate Committee on Insular Possessions and had a tour of investigation to make in connection with it, and was also obliged to spend some time "back home" in straightening out his business affairs. In fact, he would be away from Washington much of the coming winter. He did not like the idea of leaving Jeff alone with the servants so long in his Washington house, and all the preparatory schools where he had made inquiries were full. Mrs. Gale's account of the boys' school in Lanoraie had interested him, especially as Jeff needed Latin—in which the school was especially strong—and a modern language for college entrance.

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The head master had wired back, explaining the arrangement that might be made with Mrs. Cherton. Jeff, in the meantime, had been conducting researches on his own account as to the winter sports in Canada. The result was that Jeff would arrive before many days.

"But, oh dear! a boy isn't a girl," Philippa sighed, with a homesick longing for Anne and Virginia. Still, the thought of anybody from home gave life a different aspect. "And if it had to be one of the boys instead of Anne 'n' Virginia, I'd rather have Jeff than anyone else," she went so far as to admit.

Her school work began to interest Philippa, particularly the French classes. Considering how little she seemed to have learned in her four lessons of French a week the year before, it seemed fairly miraculous that, at the end of one week, she could really exchange a few simple sentences in French with Madame or Mademoiselle. At the table she had no difficulty whatever in making her wants known or in responding to those of others. Madame was really a marvelous teacher. While the language sounded both beautiful and exotic on her lips, and she apparently talked at the

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usual conversational speed of her compatriots, her enunciation was so softly distinct and she had had so much experience with the linguistic difficulties of the learner, and her face and the delicate pantomime with which she accompanied her words were so expressive, that it seemed almost impossible not to get the sense at least, of what she said. Her patience was endless and the sense of humor which she could never quite suppress had a way of making difficulties and mistakes funny instead of irritating or discouraging. Philippa had grammar, composition, and sight translation with her, the prepared translation and reading with Mademoiselle, while the whole school came together for conversation at the end of the school day. Then certain girls were always chosen to tell some incident of the day, and Madame prompted, encouraged, told funny stories herself, and, above all, *listened* with a concentration that was almost genius. At this time the girls were never interrupted for corrections of mistakes, although, the next day, these had a way of coming up in grammar or composition class.

French conversation with the girls had its funny side. They were expected to report at

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night whether they had faithfully spoken French all day or not. In the report the varying degrees of conscientiousness were illustrated most amusingly. Some girls unblushingly reported that they had kept the rule when Philippa knew that the style of their conversation had been something less than "the French of Strafford—atte—Bowe," had been; in fact, after the manner of "*Voulez-vous* come and take a walk *avec* me?" Another girl—that was Flora Brundage, the perpetually red eyed—once burst into tears and confessed herself a criminal of the deepest dye because she could not be sure that she had not used an English word at breakfast time without prefacing it with, "*Qu'est-ce-que c'est que* ——?" It must be admitted, however, that Flora was the morbidly conscientious girl of the school and had no imitators.

The quaint old *History of Canada* that Philippa studied filled her with interest. The stories of Jacques Cartier and Champlain; of the missionary Brebeuf and the "*coureur de bois*," Du Lhut of Frontenac; of the heroic women, of whom Marguerite Bourgeoys was the leader; of the gallant soldier D'Iberville and the English conqueror Wolfe; the brav-

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ery of the explorers and the heroism of the missionaries. The picturesqueness, the self-sacrifice, the hardships, all filled her with enthusiasm; the romantic sounding names kindled her imagination. The fact that it had once been considered possible to make friends of the Indians, and that this had been partially accomplished was a revelation to her. With the sometimes uncomfortable habit of drawing conclusions, she could not help contrasting this early era of missionary zeal with the later succession of bloody tragedies which had finally established the whites as the owners of the entire domain of the American Indians. The fact that she was living on the bank of the same river down which Jacques Cartier and Champlain had sailed; her discovery of the old manor and what Mademoiselle had told her of its history; the young Englishman who was that romantic thing, the descendant of the "Seigneurs" of the manor—although Philippa would not have been the descendant of Yankees had she not realized that the rents from a few tiny cabins and equally small farms did not make a princely income—all these things made her eager to know the whole history of the land.

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Her genuine interest in it all seemed surprising to the six rather stolid girls who made up the history class. These were her corridor vis-à-vis: Margaret Dixon, whom Philippa made a point of keeping aloof from; the Turner sisters; Flora Brundage; Effie White, and a girl named Jamison about whom Philippa had no distinct idea as yet. In general, they seemed to feel that history was a task of which you had so many pages a day assigned to you; you performed your whole duty when you had memorized it. Apparently, it never occurred to them that it had any connection with themselves or their lives. If they had known that Philippa sometimes read on ahead of the assignment, they would have regarded her as more of a freak than they apparently already did.

Perhaps some of Margaret Dixon's increasing antagonism to "the American" came from the fact that Philippa was clever in algebra, while Margaret was, to Philippa, inconceivably "dense." Long after Philippa had grasped the essential features of a theorem and the reasons for it, Margaret was groping around in a fog of confusion mixed with resentment. It appeared sometimes that she thought under-

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standing mathematics was an evidence of an inferior intelligence. Sometimes she implied that everything was explained by Philippa's being the teacher's favorite.

"It's funny that when she seems to think it's only inferior persons who can understand how to square a negative quantity, she should be so sore at me for being able to do it," thought Philippa, with amusement tempered with exasperation.

There was more loneliness and forlornness in the situation, though, than anything else. If there had been some one—Mother or Anne or Virginia—to laugh with about it, it would have been funny. But there seemed to be no one to laugh with. Madame, of course, was too far above all human frailties to quite understand, Philippa thought. Moreover, the spell she exerted over even the most obtuse of the girls was such that they never showed to her their small weaknesses; childish bickerings flickered out when they came into her presence. And Mademoiselle, now that school had opened, was so sobered—and stiffened—by professional responsibility that one couldn't be really confidential with her for fear it would involve her in some admission that was not

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quite impartial. Philippa had found that out after having once been guilty of an outburst on the score of Margaret Dixon. After seeing how embarrassed Mademoiselle had been, Philippa drew back into her shell, a little hurt at Mademoiselle's attitude. No, there was no one she would rely on but just herself.

So she lived for those first days an isolated life. For the first time in her life she was without the soft, warm enfolding of her own home people, the invariable balm to come back to after any little sting from the outside. The first rebuff made her so timid about making advances that she made no more.

In some ways it was probably good for her. Certainly, she poured her whole force into study. Never before, perhaps, in her gay little existence had Philippa put all of herself, her quick wit, her vivid imagination, her capacity for enthusiasm, into study. The most thrilling part of her life had always been outside of school hours. But now, without this colorful outside life, she attacked every subject with zest; her bright eyes on Madame and her lips unconsciously moving as Madame spoke, she absorbed her accent; she practiced rolling her r's when she was dress-

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ing; she attacked the pile of books on her study table in the evening with appetite. Difficulties vanished before her. After several days she was promoted to the classes in grammar and translation with girls who had been studying French at the Château for two years; she was so far ahead of Margaret Dixon in algebra that the teacher assigned her extra problems every evening; in history and English she was the girl to whom Miss Shelby turned when everyone else had failed to know the answer to a question.

All this did not help her popularity with the other girls. Pretty like pink-and-white Bertha Ross, who had looked at her with a very friendly smile when they were first introduced, now shrank back with something like awe in her eyes. But the more lonely Philippa was, the more fiery was the zeal with which she attacked her lessons.

It wasn't long before this interest began apparently to fill up her life. The routine began to seem pleasant. At the end of the first week she was surprised to find with what satisfaction she went to bed at night, the various orderly activities of the day done up in neat packages, as it were, in her mind and

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laid away in the neat compartment of memory where they belonged. In the morning, after the first dismayed conviction that it really *was* the rising bell that was pounding in her ears, after the grand rush to get her bath over, and herself into her school uniform, the bureau and washstand put in order, the clothes pulled off the bed to air, everything that should go back in the closet placed there, the sounding of the breakfast gong was distinctly exhilarating. She sat down to the immaculate breakfast table, herself in shining neatness, with the sensation of having earned the repast and being abundantly in appetite for it. After breakfast the never-failing sweetness of morning prayers gilded the anticipation of the day's work. Then came the problem of getting one's bed made and room in spotless order, with some time left for that most effective study time of the day when the mind was at its best and freshest. Philippa usually left her French composition for that time, or the most complicated algebra example.

The orderly succession of the morning classes brought her to the lunch table with an appetite that made eating a keen pleasure. The afternoon brought sight translation,

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where Philippa particularly shone. Her imagination made her mind leap ahead with intuition at the meaning of passages that were as the deadest of dead languages to most of the other girls. Helen Odell occasionally surpassed her there. She had a lazy fashion of lowering her eyes to the book that promised careless work. Sometimes it was so; but at other times, especially when the text spoke of sentiment or emotion, slow fire would come into her long leaf-brown eyes and a sort of suffused radiance that seemed to take the place of red in her cheeks, and she would translate with an ease and grace and fervor that made it astonishingly impressive. Philippa often wondered about this girl who seemed so aloof from all the others and yet was evidently not lonely as Philippa was. She seemed to be in a world of her own by her own preference. The conversation class was at once the most stimulating and the most difficult. There were always so many things that she wanted to talk about, and it was so amazingly hard to find the French words to clothe them in. She usually came out of that class quite exhausted, glad it was the last task of the day, and entirely skeptical of Madame's assurance that

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sometime she would find herself thinking some thoughts in French.

The hour of exercise when the whole school, two by two, filed up and down every street in the little town with Miss Shelby or Mademoiselle at the head, had its irksome features, of course. It seemed so silly to have to go tethered, as it were; and the effort to speak French seemed greater out of doors. These would have been minor drawbacks, however, if she had had a chum with whom she could have laughed, occasionally gone hand in hand as she saw some of the other girls doing, exchanged eloquent glances over the fall coloring of the fine old trees. But, Philippa having no special friend, her partner was apt to be a different one every day, and they usually had surprisingly little to say to one another. The walk usually intensified Philippa's feeling of being enveloped in a strange new isolation; she seemed like the only person in this new world who had no intimates.

Still there was the pleasure of walking and the never-ending interest of new things, quaint and indescribably foreign to anything Philippa had ever known. And the sharp, dry

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September air sent one back so eager for dinner. Then came evening prayers when Madame's voice seemed to rest on each one of them with a benediction of peace, and, later, the eager effort to get all of one's preparation for the next day done in study hour. That done, who can describe the deliciousness of the first stretching out in bed, the relaxation of one's whole pleasantly tired young body in the smoothly taut, fresh sheets? It seemed a pity that that luxury lasted such a tiny interval before one was overtaken by sleep.

It seemed to Philippa, the night of her second Sunday at the Château, that she had never quite known what "Sunday" meant before. First, the rising bell was a whole hour later, so, after having waked at the usual time, there was the delightful snuggling back into bed for a whole hour longer of sleep. Then her eyes fell upon that Sunday dress which her mother had told her was to be so important a part of her wardrobe here, but which Philippa, used to wearing her best frocks at any hour of any day of the week when festive things happened, had been skeptical about. Now, after a week when it had been scrupu-

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lously saved, she knew that her mother was right, and the sight of it, spread out all ready to wear, with her best shoes and new fall hat and kid gloves beside it, was incentive enough to make her jump out of bed the very instant that the gong finally sounded. Dressing that morning was an exciting adventure after the monotony of the week.

Breakfast, too, was different, with hot waffles and maple syrup; the walk to church was different because Mademoiselle had asked Philippa to go with her, and they went off separately, not waiting for the usual procession of girls. Away from the others Mademoiselle was as dear and funny as she had been the day when they had the revel over the candy box. The Church of England service was new to Philippa; the very English accent of the rector and his high-colored English face were new and thrilling, and the service had its dignified, sometimes surprisingly emotional, appeal.

“Do you know, I think it’s so nice and comfortable to say, when all those awfully dignified-looking people—who you know can never have done anything very wrong—are saying it with you, ‘We have done those things which

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we ought not to have done and have left undone those things which we ought to have done and there is no health in us.' It takes all the sting out of it somehow, and yet you feel that you have said all that could really be expected of you," Philippa confided to Mademoiselle on their way home. She couldn't understand why Mademoiselle thought what she had said was so funny.

The ineffable peace and sunshine of that whole day were, somehow, unique in Philippa's experience, and so remained each recurring Sunday. The rapt face of Madame, which seemed to wear a radiance as if it were bathed in some light the others couldn't see—a light that always brought back to Philippa Mademoiselle's "She is a saint, my mother"—was part of it; the especially good dinner with whipped cream in the dessert and the table linen especially white and crisp, the rare leisure of the afternoon with time to write letters or to read unscholastic literature propped up on the bed in a soft rose-colored dressing gown with warm, rosy bedroom slippers on one's feet; the cheerful suppertime and the short evening service, of music chiefly, in the church. It was then, while the organ dreamed

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away into a silence which memory made seem melodious, that one dared to admit the softened loveliness of thoughts of home. Then she asked herself whether she had decided to stay in Canada or go home, and found she was not ready with the answer.

CHAPTER X

MADAME'S thought had been a happy one. The knowledge that she could decide whether to stay or to leave took the sting out of Philippa's homesickness and gave her a detached, rather superior feeling. She could observe, with the impersonality of one who might leave them the next day, how different these girls were from Anne and Virginia, from all American girls, in fact. After a few days she concluded they were all, with two or three exceptions, after much the same pattern as Effie White and Margaret Dixon, the girl across the hall. Among the exceptions was a girl Philippa was sorry for, Flora Brundage, who seemed to cry all the time, and that pretty girl named Bertha Ross, who had smiled at her in a friendly way. There was also, of course, Helen Odell.

Early one morning Philippa was running down to Madame's French composition class

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when Angelique, a wide grin upon her red face, met her with the news that a "handsome young gentleman" awaited her in the drawing room. At least that was how Philippa had already learned to translate what sounded like "*Un b'en beau m'sieu.*" She added that Madame gave permission for her to see him. Margaret Dixon, who happened to be in the hall at that moment, looked at her with envy. It was the first interest, other than an unfriendly one, that Margaret had shown her.

"Surely it can't be Mr. Ross Cuthbert," thought Philippa, her heart beating fast. "But who else could it be ——?"

As she opened the door a tall youth jumped up.

"Why, Jeff Randolph!" The faint twinge of disappointment disappeared in the joy of seeing anybody from home. And she wondered why she had not known that it must be Jeff.

"I'm going to school here." Jeff grinned as he watched for the effect of his information.

"Why, of course I knew that." Still the shock of the surprise was so great that it was some moments before she could speak calmly.

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"How in the world did it happen? You hadn't any idea of coming when I left home."

"Well, you see, Dad has got to be away from Washington a great deal this session—short session, too. Hadn't heard of the place then. He has some business back home to look after. Legislation is coming up in the Senate that they want special information about—Dad's chairman of that committee. He'll have to be away some time for that. He didn't want to leave me alone so long in the house with just the servants. No reason in that, but he thought there was. And you know I need a modern language to make college. When your mother told him about the French here—though she said she didn't know as much about things at the Boys' School, as at the Château, he decided right off the bat."

"That's trick. But ——" It was on the tip of Philippa's tongue to tell Jeff she might not stay. But, somehow, she was ashamed to let him know she was thinking of giving up anything she had begun. Besides, now that Jeff was here, perhaps it would be better to stay until Christmas, anyway. Philippa was surprised at her own excitement; she never

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remembered having been particularly thrilled about seeing Jeff before. She was so used to him that she probably had not ever really looked at him. Perhaps the unmistakable envy on Margaret Dixon's face had enhanced Jeff's value; perhaps it was that he had so lately come from that home that she could still hardly trust herself to think about, so sure was it that the tears of longing would come into her eyes. However that might be, she looked at Jeff for the first time with the eyes with which she might have observed some interesting young stranger, as, for example, she had looked at the young "Seigneur" the other day.

And, really, Jeff seemed worth looking at. There was an extraordinarily pleasant expectation upon his face, an eager friendliness that almost brought a lump to her throat; it seemed years since anyone had looked at her that way. Jeff had grown very tall during the last year; he was nearly six feet at that moment, and he was so straight and so well set up that he showed very little of the awkwardness that most boys who have suddenly grown enormously betray. He certainly was a different person from the awkward boy

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in knickerbockers whom Philippa had championed two years before. His suit was so smart and so becoming that Philippa had to caution herself that it would be "silly" if she were to feel any admiration for Jeff.

"That's just because it's a new suit," she told herself cautiously. "Just wait until he gets the creases out of the trousers; he'll look just the way all *boys* do then." Although Jeff was almost two years older than Philippa, she had begun to feel that he was too youthful for her to be really interested in. "Now real young men can wear their clothes without having them look as if they had been crawling through barbed wire fences in them. That young man at the Manor didn't look new and dressed up the way Jeff does and still his clothes looked so nice and smart on him."

In spite of all this and of her determination not to "act like an idiot," the tears did come into her eyes as Jeff's big friendly hand gripped hers.

Jeff's keen black eyes softened while he told himself. "Why — the poor — little — kid! She's homesick as the dickens. And she thinks she's hiding it from her Uncle Jeff."

"How's every little old thing at home?"

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Philippa started to ask this with appropriate lightness; but, halfway, she realized her danger and stopped to hide her brimming eyes in a pretext of tying her shoe.

"Oh—I don't know," drawled Jeff, with a negligent air that he was far from feeling. "Rather scratch lot out for the eleven at the High this fall. Made me so sick I had begun to think I'd better go away to school this year when we heard of this joint. I couldn't quite go over to any of the others."

"No, of course not." Philippa's voice was still muffled from stooping over. "But—the girls? Anne 'n' Virginia?"

"Oh, I don't know." Jeff was ostentatiously negligent again. "'Bout the same—I never was crazy about them, you know."

"They haven't written yet. I suppose they're busy. There's always so much doing at the first of the year."

Jeff felt the wistfulness in her voice and hastened to say:

"Virginia stopped me just before I left to tell me to give you her dearest love and tell you how frightfully she missed you. I guess she does, too ——" Jeff was shrewdly calculating that perhaps this would do Philippa

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more good than harm. "Anne, too. But she's pretty much excited about basket ball."

"Oh, Jeff, if I had stayed home I'd have had such fun!" Returning composure was threatened again. She was biting her lips nervously.

"What do you care? Think of the winter sports here. That's what brought me. Snow-shoeing and tobogganing and skating—skiing, too, perhaps ——"

"I thought it was French and Latin your father wanted you to get here," Philippa flashed out, so far herself again that she could tease.

"Poor little kid," he was thinking again. "She must have been lonesome. It's no job at all to cheer her up. Just somebody from home. Don't wonder at all. Remember how the Gales took hold of us after Mother died—rather a bum fake of a home we had for a while, just a lot of servants to take the place ——"

"Look here, Pip ——"

Philippa laughed rosily at the old nickname ——

"What kind of a bunch have you got here

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anyway? The girl I saw out in the hall looked like a dumb-bell—and—sort of clumsy.”

Philippa was human enough to feel not unpleased at this. But she answered with propriety.

“I suppose they’re all right. I haven’t really got acquainted yet.”

“I never knew it to take you long to get acquainted,” Jeff said bluntly. Then he changed the subject. “Haven’t had a chance to give the guys at the school more than the once over,” he said meditatively. “But I think I have their number. Our state’s right on the Canadian boundary, you know. Two or three of ’em are inclined to get gay. I’ll have to thrash them soon ——”

“Oh, Jeff, fighting’s against the rules. And they don’t allow hazing.”

Jeff’s black eyes sparkled with amusement.

“No, I suppose not,” he drawled. “I’m sure they’re all plastered over with rules there, written and unwritten; they wouldn’t be kin to the English if they weren’t. And they’ll have ‘forms’ instead of ‘grades.’ And ‘prefects’ and all that. I haven’t read *Tom Brown at Rugby* for nothing. And the head

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of the school will exhort us to carry on the 'school spirit' as solemnly as if we were Eton or Harrow. All the same there are two or three guys it's destined I'll fight. I saw them sizing me up. There isn't a school that a new chap can come into especially if he's a little different from what the fellows have always been accustomed to, where he isn't hazed in some way—whether they call it hazing or not. They hazed me down at the Clifton Park School, didn't they, that time you stood up for me? and it's right enough that it should be so. You've got to show what stuff is in you when you go away from people who've always known you. It makes you take stock of yourself. It works out all right once you've shown them that you can stand the gaff. And ——” He carefully gazed into space as he said this, “I guess—in a few hours somebody will punch my head because I say ‘I guess’—but I do guess that girls' schools are pretty much the same. And *they're* all right, too. Only, Pip, to judge by that specimen I saw, you can put it all over them in a little while?”

“Why?” asked Philippa, laughing and dimpling. (Who could have helped it?)

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"What you wear under your hat when you wear one," he responded gravely. "Although we mustn't be too cocksure, either. I dare say some of the guys at the school will put it all over me in some way I'm not expecting. But—say—I've got to go. I had only one hour 'out of bounds'—that's what they call it here, and I've been orating fully an hour. Don't know what does make me so conversational. Will you please give these letters from my dad and your mother to the lady who runs this joint?"

"What are they?" Philippa was mystified.

"My references, I suppose." Jeff's eyes danced. Then he burst out laughing. "I say, Pip, isn't it a good one? Our parents have to respectfully crave permission of your lady-boss here for you and me to see each other once in a while without having a teacher present. As if we hadn't been pals for years! I think your mother had to put all the separate items in it. She certainly is a dandy; she thought of everything: rowing, walking, seeing you in the 'drawing room.' Now, you'd better be careful how you treat me. Don't you dare be impertinent to me, as you've been sometimes. And if you quarrel with me

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maybe you'll lose me. I'm a Privilege now
——Oh you Convent Girl!"

They both broke into satisfying laughter which became almost hysterical on Philippa's part as she felt the unnatural bonds that had been about her dropping off. She laughed and laughed until Jeff began to look at her with anxiety in his friendly eyes. At last, wiping her eyes without any embarrassment this time——since the tears came from an excess of mirth instead of from a homesick little heart——she said:

"Oh, Jeff, *when* were you so exciting before?"

"All right for you," said Jeff, too well pleased with his work to be sensitive. "I've got to be going. But remember. A reward is before you if you take your hazing like a nice little lady."

CHAPTER XI

AS Philippa hurried up to her room at the end of the first class, Margaret Dixon was going the same way. Very surprisingly Margaret stopped and spoke to her.

"That was a nice-looking boy. I didn't know you had a friend at the Boys' School."

"Didn't you?" It wasn't a brilliant answer but Philippa really didn't know what else to reply. It surely wasn't very surprising that Margaret didn't know. Conversation certainly had not been encouraged.

"Why was he allowed to come to see you? That isn't usual. Especially when the boy is at the school here."

Philippa was wondering whether she ought to say something that would make the girl realize how impertinent she was. But she remembered what Jeff had said about hazing, and how good-natured he had been about it.

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Moreover, with those round eyes on her a thought struck her.

"Maybe it's just because she's *dull*. She doesn't know how rude it is to cross-question people like this." It all began to seem funny and Philippa's bright eyes danced in amusement. "But why should she be so much interested?" Wondering as she was, Philippa answered demurely.

"He is a great friend of ours from home."

"That doesn't usually make any difference. The girls often have friends there but they are not allowed to have them call."

There apparently being no answer to this, Philippa made none. She was going on when Margaret stopped her.

"I'd like to meet your friend if you get a chance to introduce me," she said calmly. "I'll do something for you some time if you do."

Philippa stood still a moment and watched her as she walked away.

"I don't believe she realizes there's anything queer about it at all," she thought, with a sort of awe. "She just wants to meet Jeff and she doesn't mind my knowing it. First, she wanted to be disagreeable to me and she

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was. And she didn't have any feeling about that, either. It didn't hurt her to be disagreeable; she rather enjoyed it. She would be disagreeable now but she wants something of me. So she had to speak and stop being disagreeable. When she wants a thing she just goes right out for it without being mortified at herself at all. I'll bet you can accomplish a lot if you're that way. And she offers me something in exchange—it's a sort of bargain. And she'd keep her word, too. I believe she would. Gosh, but she's queer!"

When Philippa joined her next class everyone of the girls in it, but Helen Odell, looked at her with a new interest mixed with envy.

"They've been told already," she thought. She couldn't help being amused, but possibly this didn't make her admire them any more. She felt a little bit superior even to pretty Bertha Ross, toward whom she had felt drawn.

In consequence of this, perhaps, her attention turned more than usual to Helen Odell, who, to tell the truth, had a sort of fascination for Philippa. The something oriental and mysterious about the long dreamy eyes and the hint of slumbering fire in her always

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aroused Philippa's imagination; and the unexplained incident when Philippa, an unwilling eavesdropper, had seen her on the shore of the Little River with a man who had never been referred to by anybody, recurred again and again and always accompanied by an uneasy sort of curiosity. Her clothing, too, put her on a different footing from the other girls. She did not wear the school uniforms; and her frocks, simple in line although they might be, had always a hint of magnificence about them, even though it might be in nothing more than a bit of unusually gorgeous embroidery. As she had been graduated from the school the year before, she was a sort of "parlor boarder"; she attended the classes in which she was especially interested very much as she chose.

Yet something gave Philippa the impression that Madame really had Helen Odell on her mind more than any other girl in the school. Perhaps it was because of a little incident that had happened the first week. One morning when Angelique was taking the mail down to the postoffice she carefully selected certain letters from the bag and took them to Madame. Philippa, who was pass-

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ing Madame's room, saw her looking the letters over anxiously. As she came to the end of them her face cleared.

"*C'est tout comme il faut, Angelique,*" she said, too fast for Philippa to follow, but the relief in her face made it clear that she had said something was all right. Even at the distance at which she stood Philippa could not avoid recognizing the very individual handwriting on the letters that Angelique put back into the mail bag; she had seen Helen Odell's heavy, free penmanship on too many written exercises to mistake it now, and the peculiar violet ink which she affected. This little episode had always stuck in Philippa's memory.

On this day, as they left the class together, Philippa felt moved to speak.

"I don't know how you thought of that translation of that last paragraph," she said. "I puzzled over it for the longest time and couldn't make sense of it."

Miss Odell turned with a smile of lazy charm.

"But I've had so much more French than you. I ought to do better—even if you are one of those clever Americans."

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Her face and voice were alike delightful and Philippa was immediately fascinated.

"I can't tell you how nice it is to have you say something pleasant," she said impulsively. "I think you're the first girl here who has been friendly."

"Fearfully afraid we Canadians are of taking the first step," she laughed. "But, you see, I'm almost an old lady compared with the other girls. I'm almost twenty. Why don't you come in to see me this evening during study-hour?"

"Oh, I'd love to —— But aren't we supposed to be in our rooms then?"

"Oh, yes, of course. How stupid of me not to think of that. You see, I'm not exactly a regular student here and I suppose I take all the liberty I can with the rules. Come before study-hour, then —— But it's a frightful pity. It's so much more fun to talk when you ought not to."

All the rest of the day Philippa's thought was far more full of the coming talk with this girl than with Jeff's arrival. Before this she had somehow escaped the usual school girl "crushes." She had had warm friendships with Anne and Virginia, but the species

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of sentimental adoration that girls are apt to experience for some slightly older girl or woman—a teacher often—she had never been a victim to. But now, somehow, this girl who carried with her a warm haze of emotion completely captivated Philippa's fancy. When, across the dinner table, they exchanged friendly glances Philippa tingled with pleasure.

So when, almost immediately after evening prayers, she hurried to Miss Odell's room, her heart was beating hard with a sort of excitement. The whole aspect of things had changed. The one girl in the school whom she admired wanted to make friends with her. Very few of the girls, apparently, were invited to Miss Odell's room; Philippa had never seen anyone frequent it. Apparently this girl lived in as great isolation as Philippa had done, only, with her, no one could doubt that it was from choice.

"And she wants me to come to see her," thought Philippa exultantly. "And I know she's going to tell me all sorts of interesting things. You can just feel that she has been places and done things and read ever so much. How *sweet* of her it is to be nice to me!"

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Her heart beat high with a generous emotion. "I'd just love to do something for her!"

She tapped on Miss Odell's door. There was a musical, "Come in." As she opened the door Philippa got a confused idea of there being much in it, of color, pictures, cushions, fragrance, so much more than in any of the other fastidiously simple rooms. A rich piece of Oriental drapery of some sort was thrown over the bed; it was heavy with embroidery. The bed was heaped with cushions. In the midst of them Helen Odell lay in a beautiful luxury of comfort. She stretched out a warm white hand and, smiling, pulled Philippa down beside her.

"And now let's talk," she said.

CHAPTER XII

ABOUT a week after Philippa's first intimate talk with Helen Odell the girls' school was out for one of its dutiful afternoon walks. Mademoiselle headed the procession and Philippa, at her side, was rejoicing in much talk. It was not only that Mademoiselle invited her to chatter as much as she pleased. It was beginning to be much easier to carry on a conversation in French. Moreover, her general constraint was wearing off. While she did not feel that any of the girls except Helen Odell were her friends, that one friendship had banished for good the hideous sensation of being set apart and solitary that had made the first days at the Château almost too hard to bear.

For one thing, Jeff was proving, with other girls beside Margaret Dixon, a subject of acute interest. One by one they approached

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Philippa to ask some question about him—how old he was—how long she had known him—how he happened to come to the Boys' School.

"Gosh, I didn't know just being a boy was such an important thing before," thought Philippa. "I wonder if it is because Jeff is so fascinating or whether it is just because being at a girls' school and kept away from boys makes them seem mysterious and valuable."

This subject came into her thoughts as she walked along with Mademoiselle and the next step was, of course, to put the question to her. Mademoiselle's cheek, pinker than ever in the sharp air, dimpled with amusement. But she spoke demurely.

"Are girls, then," she said—in French, of course, "not in the least interested in boys in Washington, D. C., of the United States? It must be that indeed a quite superior race is being developed there."

Philippa laughed. Then she reflected.

"Some of the girls *are* getting mushy," she said at last, reluctantly. But Anne 'n' Virginia 'n' I don't go with them."

"Is it not that they may be older? At fif-

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teen one is not yet very old. One has not yet experienced all things."

"Yes—— But," Philippa began, and then she had to laugh. "But it must be different when girls are old *enough*, and when it's a man instead of just a boy."

Somehow this silenced them both for a moment.

"Do you find yourself very good friends with Helen Odell?" Mademoiselle asked at last, rather constrainedly.

Philippa jumped. Oddly enough, it was of Mademoiselle herself that she had been thinking. For the first time it had occurred to her to wonder why Mademoiselle Mimi, so pretty and so fascinating and merry, was neither married nor apparently about to be married. For she must be—over twenty, at the least! So she was confused and stumbled a bit in answering Mademoiselle's question.

"Why—yes—I think so. She asks me to come to her room and all. I—*think* she likes me."

"She is a very fascinating girl, I think. Do you not think so also?"

"Yes, indeed." There was no mistaking the heartiness of Philippa's tone. "And I

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think she's pretty—oh—more than pretty. She doesn't seem —— She's like somebody you read about in a book ——” Philippa stumbled along, utterly unable to put her feeling into words.

“I know what you mean,” said Mademoiselle quietly. “Does she talk to you very much?” She turned her head and looked straight in Philippa's eyes as she asked this.

For some reason the girl blushed. Then, just as the silly blush would have faded she got furious at herself for being so silly. And that made her scarlet.

“Why, yes, Mademoiselle Mimi. She has talked to me a good deal. Ordinarily Philippa would have followed this with a “Why?” But this time she did not.

“I think you would do much for a friend. Has she ——” Mademoiselle began. Then she stopped and turned her head away from Philippa a long time, thinking. When she spoke again it was of the wonderful fall coloring of the sugar maples they were passing.

But her silence did not end the subject of Helen Odell in Philippa's mind. Her troubled look lasted for a long time.

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The stillness was beginning to be embarrassing when a sort of ripple of excitement that ran along the line of girls made her realize that something was happening. Half a block ahead of them was a young man striding easily along. It was clear he was an Englishman; no one else ever wore brown tweeds like those or wore them in the same way.

"His clothes look as if they had never been new and would never be old," Philippa had said triumphantly to Mademoiselle, proud of having got just the idea in her head into words when a curious expression on Mademoiselle's face of being resolute that she would not be excited made her look more closely at the young man. It was the young Seigneur, Mr. Ross Cuthbert. Then Philippa forgot Mademoiselle in being a little excited herself.

"I wonder if he will recognize me in all this mess of girls," she thought. She unconsciously prepared her face for a recognizing smile.

Her trouble was entirely thrown away. There was a smile on Mr. Cuthbert's face, it is true, but it was a general, rather amused one, as if the sight of the column of chatter-

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ing girls had a humorous aspect for him. But when his eyes fell on Mademoiselle the smile vanished. With an effect of desperate haste, his eyes on Mademoiselle, he took off his hat. He wavered as though he would stop. But the line of girls—giggling now—some of them—for the young Seigneur was a great figure in their life—passed on. Out of the tail of her eye Philippa could see that he was absentmindedly holding his hat in his hand.

“I didn’t know real young men got fussed just because they met girls,” thought Philippa, acutely disappointed. The idea didn’t fit in with her picture of a Seigneur; the negligent ease of his approach was more in keeping. She was turning to Mademoiselle with this confidence when something on her face stopped the words. Mademoiselle didn’t look as if she wanted anyone to talk to her.

“I wonder why Madame doesn’t like him,” Philippa thought. “And I wonder whether Mademoiselle does or doesn’t. *I* like him, anyway. It is so interesting to talk to a young man like that. I suppose it is because you really learn something.” But Philippa’s thoughts as she walked on were very much more about the fascination of Mr. Ross Cuth-

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bert's easy, superior air and how becoming the brown tweeds were to his tawny hair than on any of the information she had derived from his conversation.

Again a flutter indicative of an increased interest in life ran down the line of girls. Philippa felt it, although no word was said, and looked about her for an explanation.

"Oh, we're coming near the Boys' School," she thought, with a highly superior and remote amusement. "I don't see how anyone can get excited about just boys. If they had had the wads of them about that we did at the Clifton Park School and High School they wouldn't—I wonder if that is Jeff coming out of the door! If it isn't that crazy Boulden boy who is with him! Gosh, but that is a good-looking suit of Jeff's. It must have been made to order at a tailor's. I never knew that Jeff was good-looking before. I suppose some of the girls are going to get mushy about him—I'm going to tell Jeff he must make that Boulden boy stop looking at me like that. It's too silly."

"That Boulden boy" had already created a reputation among the girls by his persistent staring at Philippa when he had met the girls

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from the Château on the street. So now they all tried to catch Philippa's attention with meaning glances. Between pleasure at the flattery and rage because of the unworthy occasion of it Philippa felt her face grow hot. The very becoming flush deepened as they approached the boys. But when Boulden gallantly raising his hat with one hand, with the other deftly slipped a folded bit of paper into her gloved hand, she fairly turned white with astonishment and embarrassment. The next minute, however, she began to shake with laughter.

"Oh, Mademoiselle, look what that boy did," she cried out, holding the note up for Mademoiselle's inspection.

Mademoiselle darted a surprised look at the girl. But she offered no remark.

"If she gives it to me without opening it," her thoughts ran, "I shall have to wonder at her—and then I am afraid I shall not like her so well. She would then not be human."

But Philippa was opening the note. And she giggled outright, although the expression on her face was far from a displeased one.

"He's such an egg," she said, sticking the note in her pocketbook. "Think of taking all

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that trouble just to tell a girl you would like to be introduced to her."

The girls were eying Mademoiselle expectantly. She looked undecided.

"It is the usual thing in such a case that the note be given to the teacher," she said.

"Oh, I shouldn't like that—it doesn't seem quite fair to him—although it was a silly thing for him to do. I mean, I wouldn't exactly like to be the one to tell on him, you know. It's horrid to *tell* on people. It makes me feel like a *worm* for blabbing it out. But *will* I have to give you the note—it makes me feel like a monitor—I always used to hate to be monitor."

Mademoiselle's eyes were on Philippa's distressed face.

"You say that all he said was that he wanted to meet you?" she asked. "There was nothing else?"

"No, not a word. And he called me 'Miss Gale.' " Philippa broke into smiles again at that. Then the smile became a laugh and then everybody laughed, all down the line, Mademoiselle as well as the girls.

"Oh, well, I will report the occurrence to Madame," said Mademoiselle, as soon as she

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could speak with proper primness. "And, unless she feels that she must insist on seeing the young man's note, I think it will not be necessary to take any action."

As they were running upstairs to take off their wraps a little cluster of the older girls gathered about Philippa.

"Weren't you an idiot to let her see the note," said Effie White. "I should think any boy would think twice before he slipped a note to you, if that's the way you act."

Margaret Dixon, who was stalking on ahead in her solid, flat-footed way, turned back, the better to pronounce judgment.

"I think Miss Gale was quite right," she, most unexpectedly, said. "I hate sneaky ways. If I want a thing I come right out and say it. And if I don't want it, I say that, too." And without another word and without more than a solemn, passing glance at Philippa, she stalked on.

"I'll say you do," Philippa said to herself, laughing. But the incident gave her a comfortable sort of feeling. It didn't seem unpleasant to have Margaret Dixon on her side. Then, all at once, a thought came to her that made her wince.

CHAPTER XIII

AT morning prayers, two days later, all the girls realized that something was troubling Madame. They would have been puzzled to explain why they felt this. Her voice was the same; her smile, when they met her eyes, the same. There was always at these times a sort of happy, peaceful remoteness which made them feel a sort of awe of her. To-day there was neither more nor less remoteness, although, possibly, the happiness and peace were submerged by something more immediate and exacting. Although the little service went on as usual there was a sense of something painful pending.

Philippa, from her seat in the row immediately in front of Madame, watched her uneasily. When she looked around the room and noticed that Helen Odell was not there—that, too, in spite of Helen's frequent

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absences, seemed threatening to her. Philippa had not had any talk with her for two or three days. Did it mean anything that Madame's simple little prayer put special stress on aspirations for perfect truthfulness and sincerity?

The prayer was over, the second "cantique" sung—"cantique" somehow seemed to imply something much more religiously beautiful than "hymn"—but the sense of suspense continued. And when Madame, instead of nodding dismissal with grave sweetness, motioned the girls to be seated again, they all knew that there was reason for their fear that something painful was to be expected.

There was no preamble and Madame spoke in English. That, again, was a sign that she had something to say to them which must not be misunderstood. It was only on the gravest occasions that Madame used English in her announcements to the school. Yet the fact that, instead of the English word, she called them "*mes enfants*" throughout, which made her words, somehow, more tenderly appealing than if she had said, "My children."

"There has been something to trouble me

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much, *mes enfants*. It has now reached that point where it is necessary that I make public what I would wish could be unsaid. It is that a superior obligation compels it."

Here she paused and surveyed them in silence a moment as if she found it hard to go on.

"There is one in the Château, although she is not to-day in this room, who was confided to me by her father and mother—of whom she is the only child—on the condition that she should not be allowed to write letters, or receive them again in turn, from '*un tel monsieur*,' a certain gentleman, I would say, whose name they gave me. 'Hugh Ditmer' is the name of that—man. I would not have undertaken such a trust if they had not told me such things of this Hugh Ditmer that I was convinced it would be a wretchedness for her, Helen Odell, to marry him."

Philippa, looking about her with a sense of shock, was amazed to see that the girls, instead of being amazed at Madame's words, were looking at each other knowingly. "So they knew, too," she thought to herself. "She has talked to others. But I don't think 'The

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Castle of Liberty' is the right name for this place."

"It is not necessary that I tell you, *mes enfants*, of these things. The very least fault of which they had proof was that this Hugh Ditmer loved the fortune that he thought Helen would one day possess. But——there were other things it is not possible for you who are but *bien petites enfants* to know how a man may be cruel." At the last word her mouth made a blanched round of horror. It was momentarily only, but Philippa never forgot it; it set her mind wondering. But, more than that, it made what followed so convincing that it was not for a moment to be questioned. "It was because I, myself, who loved Helen, would save her from what I knew would be unhappiness that I consented to watch that no harm came to her until that time should come when she would know that we who were older knew what was best for her.

"In the last week it has been made plain to these parents that messages have been exchanged between this man and Helen. It is certain that this is so, although it is not clear by what means. Thus I appeal to you, *mes*

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enfants, that you search your hearts and consciences and tell me which one of you has done this. It could not have been the servants, for, in this busy time, no one of them has been away from the house except to the mass—on a day when the mails are not open. It would seem certain that some one of you has put some letter of hers among your own. It is not a grave sin; it would be natural, perhaps, for you to feel sympathy with her and do what she has asked you. I ask that you will tell me what you have done so we may guard one of our number from harm.”

She stood, white with the evident effort she had made, but confident, waiting for a confession to be made. There was a terrible silence. It was so overpowering that Philippa did not dare to raise her head and look around. She did not dare to raise her eyes, either, to Madame’s.

Nobody spoke. Some of the girls were looking about to surprise a sign of guilt from some other face; others were staring straight at Mademoiselle, as if to convince her of their guiltlessness. Everyone was profoundly serious. Flora Brundage, who always wept at everything, began to weep from the strain,

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and so did the younger Turner sister. But still nobody spoke. The silence became unendurable. Madame grew whiter and whiter; her soft little mouth was compressed almost scornfully; but her eyes were full of grief.

CHAPTER XIV

NOTHING more was said about Helen Odell. Classes began immediately. Perhaps it was because of this; perhaps it was because Madame's manner had overawed the girls; perhaps it was because Philippa was intimate with nobody but Helen Odell that she heard no further discussion of the matter. She went about the daily routine of classes and preparation for them and the days were full of cheerful and orderly activities. Bertha Ross, who now seemed to have got up her courage enough to allow her to come forward, came to Philippa's room after dinner and the call was returned the next evening. Margaret Dixon treated Philippa in much the same matter-of-fact way as she did the other girls, and the poor homesick Flora Brundage sometimes came to her for help in her lessons or for a listener when she wanted to talk of home.

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With nobody unfriendly and with several friendships in the making, Philippa ought to have been very happy. But she wasn't happy. Even though she might forget her trouble at night it lay in wait for her as soon as she had decided that what had waked her was, after all, the rising bell. She fancied that Madame's eyes did not rest on her with as clear a confidence and liking as they had at first; she imagined sometimes that the girls looked on her with suspicion, or, at least, doubt. So she began to shun them and go up to her room immediately after dinner instead of staying with the rest of the girls in the drawing room or making one of a group of girls perched on some girl's bed and talking at the top of their lungs. And she stopped going to Helen Odell's room.

Madame evidently saw that something was amiss.

"What do you do that you lose the rose in your cheeks?" Madame asked one afternoon as Philippa hurried past her in the hall. "It was not for this that you were left with us." And when the girl with a hasty, "Oh, there's nothing the matter, thank you, Madame. Perhaps I'm a little tired," hurried on, Ma-

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dame d'Albert stood and watched her with a thoughtful look on her face. Then she smiled with relief.

"I had forgotten that it is almost the time for the first examinations," she thought. "The foolish child, to think that she needs to be afraid."

But when the two days set for tests in French and English were over, and Philippa came through at the head of the list in English subjects and algebra and astonishingly near the head in French, outranking girls who had been at the Château three years or more; and when she still looked pale and troubled and kept as much to herself as she could, Madame began to be seriously concerned.

"The question is always," she told herself, "how much one has a right to intrude. I don't believe in forcing confidence. Still, I can't let this go on much longer. The child will be really ill."

The next morning Philippa did not appear at breakfast time. Immediately after prayers Madame hurried to her room.

Philippa's eyes were on the door when Madame opened it. But after the girl had

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smiled at Madame d'Albert wistfully she turned her head and looked straight ahead at the wall where the picture hung that her mother and she thought looked like the rocks and trees about their own brook at home. Madame went briskly about her investigations.

"A headache, and a dizzy head and—let me see the tongue—yes, I thought it, coated. No sore throat? And—this in your mouth, now, and no talking. I will talk and you can nod or shake your head. This picture is of your sister Doreen. Yes? But she is lovely. And this is the wonderful brother Bayard? And what a fine father—he could be gentle always. Now don't bite my good thermometer in two! The time is up, *va!* No, no temperature—or only half a degree. Evidently just an upset stomach. I'll be the doctor this time. I'll send Mimi with the dose. Now don't make a face. It won't be a very bad one, only a little salty—it'll go down in a second. And now, are you all right, my little Phil-eép-a. We want you to be well. You are dear to me and Mimi. And we want that you should be happy."

She was bending over Philippa. There

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was deep concern in her eyes. A light caress fell on Philippa's cheek.

Both of Philippa's arms went around her neck and pulled her down.

"Oh, my child, you are weeping. But I thought the lonesomeness was past. Not that? Surely nothing that can have happened here is worth so much grief —— Something you want to tell me, *cherie*? Then I will sit here by you. Now! Oh, *ma petite enfant*, nothing that you can have done can keep you from looking at me. It is just a mistake —— Now tell me ——"

At first sobs and words came all mixed up together. Madame knit her brows in the effort to understand. Then——"Ah, Helen. It is of Helen? Then you must speak plainly. I must know."

"I just felt so sorry for her; and she told me all about him, that Mr. Hugh Ditmer—— only she didn't say he was the kind of man you did. She told me how wonderful he was, and how handsome, and how they had fallen in love with each other the first time they met. And, and he was *crazy* about her. And her father and mother didn't understand. They cared so much more for money than she did.

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And Hugh had given up a wonderful position out in Vancouver to be near her. And he could make *plenty* of money as soon as it was settled and he could take her with him—and she could be his inspiration. But her father and mother didn't understand. They had forgotten how they felt when they were young—only they never could have felt the way she did because she and Hugh were different. And it was killing them both not to see each other. She would lose her mind or kill herself or something if she had to stay in this *poky* place without him—only I told her I didn't think it was poky. And so—and so ——”

The impetus that had carried Philippa thus far began to die down when she reached the hard part.

“So you sympathized with her, *cherie*. And so do I. Then she asked you to do something for her?”

“Yes. Meet him at that queer pink-colored house they call the Old Cheese Factory one day when I had permission to go to see Mrs. Cherton, whom I like so much—only I didn't get permission for that. And I did go afterward. It—it didn't seem a bit the

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way it did when you talked about it at prayers. I saw then how bad it was. Like a lie to you. And I didn't think of it that way. I didn't think of your having anything to do with it. It was just her father and mother. It seemed as if they hadn't any right to force her to give him up. And I had never seen them or anything. I guess I didn't reason it out very much, but it didn't seem like deceiving *you*."

She gave an agonized squeeze to Madame's hand. Even in the midst of her real anxiety Madame smiled tenderly. She went on stroking the plump warm hand while Philippa went on with her story. That made it easier for her to talk.

"So then I went. And it was rather late in the afternoon and getting dusk so it was scary and I couldn't see him very well. There was nobody anywhere near. As soon as I saw him I—don't think I liked him very much. Oh, I almost wish Helen didn't like him. But I told him what she said and then I—I went away. When I got back I told her I didn't think he was the right kind to marry."

"Why not? Why didn't you like him?"

"Why, you *said* there were things."

"But what made you feel them?"

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"Oh, I don't like to say things—and perhaps I imagine it. But I didn't *feel* right when I was talking to him. He looked at me—I don't know how to say it—and I probably imagined it. But, wouldn't you think, Madame, that when he was in love with Helen and couldn't live without marrying her 'n' everything, he wouldn't have seen any other girl only just enough to know that she had brought him a message from Helen. I should think that is the way it would have been. But—but—he ——"

"I think I understand, *ma petite Phil-eép-a*. You needn't say anything more. Although you were so very young, only yesterday a child, he saw that you had bright eyes and pink cheeks, and it was worth while to satisfy his vanity." She spoke with superb scorn.

"Oh, but I snatched my hand away and left. And perhaps I only imagined—*maybe* he was just so glad to hear from Helen." Philippa spoke with anxious conscientiousness."

Madame looked down on her with a smile that was like a caress. There was even a twinkle in her eyes, too.

"But now," she sighed involuntarily, "I

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have to still find out what it was that Helen told you to tell him."

"Oh, Madame, I *can't* tell. It *isn't* right ever, is it, to break a promise? And I promised Helen I would never tell, never. That was why I didn't tell, that morning after prayers. I thought and thought about it. I ought to keep my promise to Helen and I ought not to act a lie. And I was acting a lie by not telling. One way or the other, I had to be false. I'm breaking my word to her, now. But it seems different, somehow, if I only tell you *my* part of it. But don't make me tell her part of it, too. That would be *terrible*." She burrowed her head in the pillow.

There was a long silence. At last Madame spoke, low.

"No, I will not ask you unless there is some danger to her now, while she is in my keeping. No?"

"No!" Philippa spoke eagerly. "It wasn't to be while she was here. Not until ——" She bit her lips.

"*Bien*. Then I will speak to Helen herself. And you must not torment yourself. You have done no real harm. I should not like

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you not to suffer for your faults. But it is morbid to suffer too long. I think ——” She surveyed Philippa critically—“I think you have suffered enough. You have not destroyed my trust in you, you know; I think I would trust you now more than I did before. What you did most young girls put in the same place would have done.”

A firefly gleam of a smile came into her eyes and an almost vanished dimple twinkled for a moment in her cheek. It was as if she had a special untold jest with Philippa—or was it with youth?

“I think—I think I would have done the same thing myself.”

CHAPTER XV

THE first time after this that Philippa met Helen Odell in the hall that young woman drew herself up and launched a blazing glance of fury at her erstwhile friend. Had she not had the bracing tonic of Madame's words Philippa might well have been deeply wounded by this. As it was a stray recollection out of her extended acquaintance with Shakespeare—rather unusually extended for her “set”—came to her mind.

“Some Cleopatra,” she thought, smiling, although a bit ruefully. “And I’m the original worm.”

A wonderful week of the golden warmth of Indian summer distracted the girls’ attention and made them haunt the river in the afternoon and long twilight. When Saturday afternoon came Jeff braved the glances of all the girls about the Château in order to ask Philippa to go rowing with him. Philippa

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was surprised that he showed no more embarrassment than he did, but conducted her across the road and down to the landing with an almost jaunty air of unconcern. But her surprise at this remarkable development in her friend was entirely swamped in amazement when she saw, comfortably established in the boat, the blushing Samuel Boulden.

"Oh, I say, Jeff," Philippa said, hesitating on the ladder-like step, "I'm afraid Madame wouldn't want me to go if she knew you had anyone with you. The permission was supposed to be just to go with you."

Sam Boulden had a countenance better adapted to the expression of other emotions than that of hurt indignation. But, as well as it would, that countenance expressed that emotion now.

"Aw—come on, Pip," said Jeff, easily. "I don't see what difference that makes. I think it would be rather silly if you went back to ask—and rather tough on Brother Boulden." He grinned cheerfully. "If a guy expresses the desire to make your acquaintance be grateful, young woman, be grateful. It may not happen again for a long time. And I'll guarantee to keep this bold bad youth in

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order. There'll be no 'Hairbreadth Harry' in mine."

Feeling a little foolish, Philippa finally descended into the boat. "After all, what else can I do?" she thought. "It would make so much of it if I objected. And Madame wouldn't want me to do that. She isn't that kind." Since yesterday Philippa's belief in the human understanding in Madame was strong. And that served to make confidence in her decisions greater. So Philippa settled herself and proceeded to enjoy the occasion to the utmost.

The boys asked her to take the rudder. Most of Philippa's experiences on the water were connected with the Cove. Mr. and Mrs. Gale were so convinced that the upper Potomac was unsafe for canoes that she was not often allowed there. At the Cove they used canoes when it was fairly calm, motor-boats for long trips to outside, less sheltered spots, and sail-boats for real sport. Row-boats were so rarely used except for something to dive from that she felt she was going back to an earlier day when she was placidly ensconced in the stern of the boat with the tiller ropes in her hands.

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It was really great fun. The boys were most solicitous about her comfort. They had evidently felt that cushions were a particularly delicate attention to the female of the species, for her end of the boat was quite heaped with them.

"They certainly have 'Said it with cushions.' I seem to be Cleopatra this time," she thought, quite amused, and yet rather gratified, too. "It really is rather nice to have them treat you as if you were getting grown-up *at last*." Jeff, of course, grinned at her as if the whole thing were a good joke they shared together. But Sam Boulden, already beginning to perspire on his seat in front of her, looked almost abashed every time he met her eyes, so exalted was his respect. Philippa was so anxious to put him at his ease that she chattered vivaciously, exerting herself to be kind to him.

They skirted the drooping willows that lined the river side of Empire Street. Philippa was already so familiar with the town that almost every place they passed had begun to have some association for her. As she caught the vivid pink plaster front of the Old Cheese Factory the recollection of her meeting there

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with Mr. Hugh Ditmer made her wince. In the broad daylight it seemed absurd to have the creepy feeling about it that she had had; it was just like the momentary pang of biting down on a sore tooth.

Beyond the Cheese Factory green fields stretched away into marshland. Then, through ranks of weeds that rippled this way and that with the changing breeze, they came to the mouth of the Little River and so turned inland. Then Philippa realized that she was to experience a new pleasure. This winding dreamily in and out, around curves, under overhanging trees, into sun, through dappled shade, now almost grounding on the shallows, now almost turned around by a racing current, had a charm that neither the Cove nor her few experiences in canoeing on the Potomac had ever furnished her. Here and there they caught a glimpse of a dingy *cabane* by a stretch of dusty road. Otherwise they had the river and the green depths of trees alone with the squirrels and the birds that the mild day had brought out of holes and nests to frolic through the brief day of summer warmth.

When they landed and were exploring the

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manor, Philippa found that while Jeff had much of her own interest—together with a much more accurate knowledge of Canadian history than herself, Sam Boulden's attitude was one of sublime indifference to anything remotely connected with the books he was forced to plod through on week days. He was amiably impervious to the interest of the two young Americans, but followed Philippa about, determinedly devoted if somewhat out of his depth.

CHAPTER XVI

B*Y* the time they started back Philippa had begun to find a worshiper a boresome possession. It had been great fun to pose as sultaness for a little while, but the effort to live up to her exalted position was wearing after a time. Constraint always made Philippa irritable and she began to mentally visit her irritation upon Mr. Samuel Boulden.

"Doesn't he know anything to do but to agree with me?" she fumed inwardly. "It's all very well to have people agree with you sometimes and it makes you cross when they don't. But when he does all the time it makes me feel as if he were a perfect fool or else pretending. And it doesn't make any debates—and I like to argue things. It's so much more interesting."

If he had been an old friend like Jeff she would undoubtedly have flat-footedly announced that she was discontented with him and made very clear the reason why. Since

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he was not she merely became very stiff and silent and very, very polite. Poor Boulden, feeling blindly that he was in the wrong somehow, wiped his perspiring brow and wondered what in the world he could do to make her look as pleasant and interested as she had at first. With his mind on this question he became very abstracted. Jeff, entirely blind to the situation, was the only one who was thoroughly comfortable. He rowed lustily, was interested in everything they passed, enjoyed himself guying the silent two in front of him when he could spare the time from thinking how good dinner—any kind of a dinner—was going to taste.

As they came in sight of their landing, therefore, he was not willing to waste any time. If it proved to be still some time to dinner he was resolved to pick up some crackers and cheese at one of the shops; he was absolutely incapable of going any longer without food. And old Boulden, as soon as they got rid of Philippa, and the idiot could act like a human being again, would be as hungry as he was.

"I wouldn't have believed that any fellow that's got all that's coming to him could be

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as dumb as Boulden has been to-day," he thought. "Don't catch me getting a crush on a girl if it takes you like that — He's got as stern a look on his old mug now as if he had just determined to cross the Delaware or the Rubicon or swim the Hellespont or something." Then he said to Boulden. "Better let me take her in, Boulden. You seem to have your mind on higher things."

To his surprise, Boulden, with a white fixed look of determination, had carefully shipped his oars and was standing up in the boat—was deliberately rocking it.

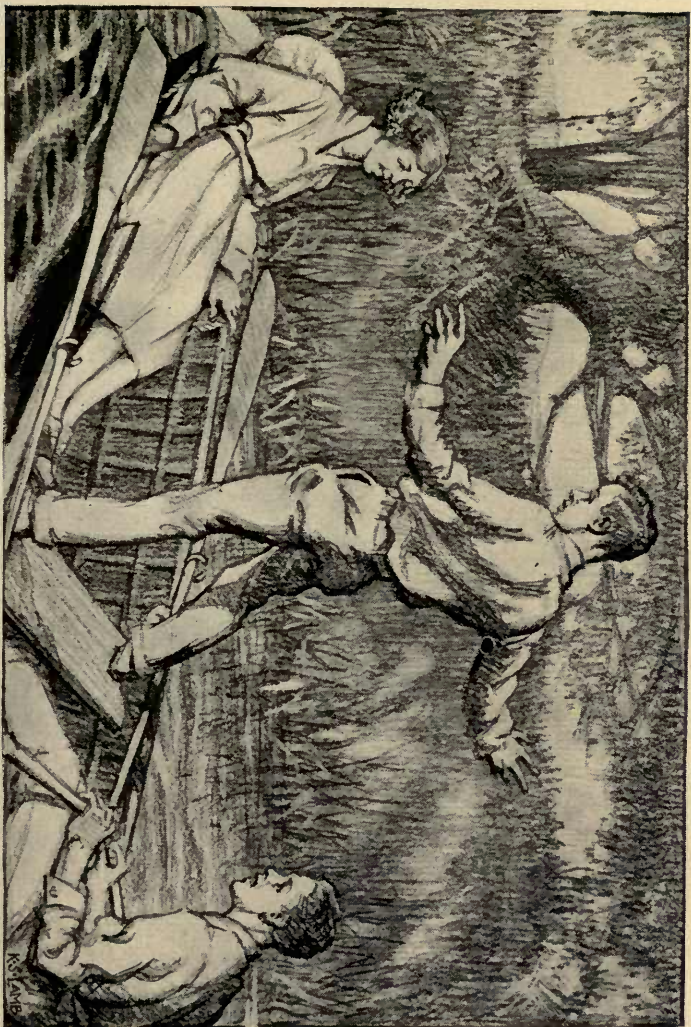
"Heigh! *You!*" shouted Jeff, thoroughly incensed. "What're you doing? I thought any idiot knew better than that! Sit down, Sam, and don't be an idiot. Philippa knows too much about boats to think that's cunning."

But Boulden only rocked the boat more.

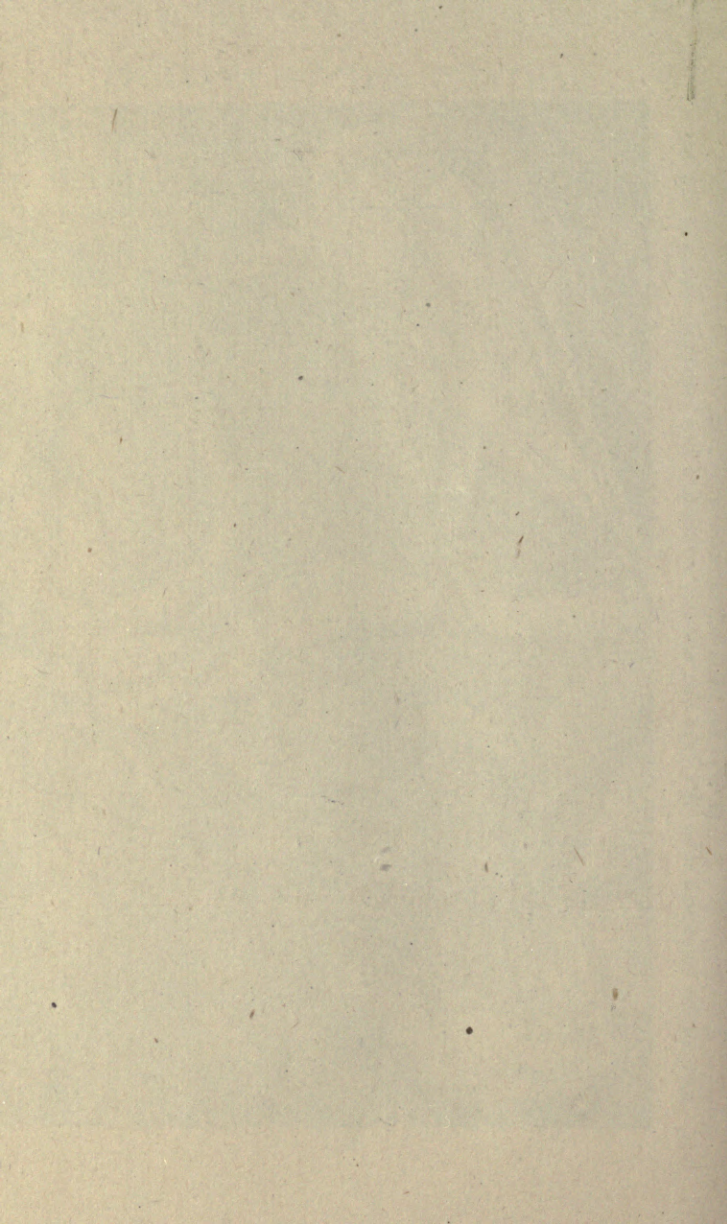
"Oh, can it!" Philippa had said disgustedly when—somehow they were all in the water.

Too good a swimmer to be frightened by the suddenness of it or bothered much by the weight of her clothes, Philippa's first thought was:

"Gosh, but it's lucky that I wore sneakers." But her second was, "Catch me going any



TO HIS SURPRISE, BOULDEN HAD CAREFULLY SHIPPED HIS OARS AND WAS STANDING UP IN THE
BOAT AND WAS DELIBERATELY ROCKING IT



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place with that worm again." Then she struck out vigorously for shore.

Jeff floated near the boat for a minute until he saw that Philippa was taking care of herself. He knew too much to insult her by offering her assistance. Then, with the painter of the boat in his teeth, he, too, struck out for shore. At that moment they heard a startling yell from Boulden, who, pursuing Philippa, all at once threw up his hands and vanished. It happened that Philippa was nearer to him than Jeff so she reached him first, grabbed the collar of his coat as he came up to the surface, and had him hanging on to the planks of the boat landing in what seemed no more than a minute. Jeff, plunging after her, helped get Boulden upon the platform.

As soon as Boulden's blowing and sputtering assured them that he was not drowned, Jeff's rage found feeble expression.

"Perhaps now you'll tell me what you made such an ass of yourself for?" he said with a mildness of intonation that left neither his hearers in any doubt of the indignation that was consuming him. "The next time I consent to let a fellow come with me when I'm taking a lady ——"

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“‘Lady’——?” Philippa started, unable to believe her ears. But scrutiny of his face revealed nothing but awe-inspiring seriousness.

“Gosh, Jeff doesn’t know how funny he is,” she thought. And yet she was not entirely unimpressed.

But they were both of them horrified by poor Boulden’s actually bursting into tears. Philippa was instantly dissolved in sympathy, but Jeff was frankly disgusted.

“P-p-perhaps you think it was any f-f-fun,” Boulden gasped, “to have to h-h-have that blamed old c-c-cramp and have a g-g-girl pull me out! And now I supp-p-pose you’ll never g-g-get over it and it’ll be b-b-blabbed all over the p-p-place and all the f-f-fellows’ll never quit ragging me. And what will Miss G-G-Gale think of me. And you may think I’m b-b-bawling but I’m not—I’m j-j-just sh-sh-shivering. And it was w-a-ater f-from the r-iv-v-ver on my face!”

Jeff was finding it hard work to keep from laughing. But he was still more disgusted than amused.

“What under the shining sun made you do such a kindergarten trick as rock the boat?”

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he demanded sternly. I can stand rough stuff, but I can't go such darned idiocy."

"If you'll promise not to tell them at the school I'll tell you." In his anxiety on this point Boulden seemed to have forgotten Philippa for the time being.

"All right—shoot."

"If I'd known how it was going to turn out I'd never have done it. But—I w-w-wanted to have a ch-ch-ch-ance to s-s-save Miss Gale f-f-from d-drowning."

As soon as the full perfection of this sank into the intelligence of the two young Americans they burst into shouts of laughter. And that made Sam Boulden at first bewildered, then madder than anything yet had had power to do.

"W-w-wat're you l-l-laughing at? What's so bl-l-l-amed funny about it? I'll bet you it wouldn't have been so f-f-funny if I hadn't had that blamed old cr-cr-cramp. If I'm f-f-funny then all the chaps in the cinemas that save girls from drowning are f-f-funny, too. How'd I know she could swim? And that I'd get a cr-cr-cramp the f-f-first thing?"

The more indignant he became the more Jeff and Philippa were forced to laugh. They

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were helpless. The tears streamed down their faces.

With one grand effort Boulden pulled himself together. Drawing himself up to his full height, he said, with offended dignity:

"I might have known Randolph would laugh like a hyena, Miss Gale, but I didn't think *you* would. The only thing that kept me from pulling you out was that blamed cramp. And I'm not to blame for that. Another time you will have to look out for yourself."

With this he turned his back on them and, still running streams of water, climbed the steps up the embankment and was seen no more.

When they had laughed so much that, in spite of the chill of the late afternoon air, they felt warm, they began to think of getting back to their respective schools. Philippa was worried over the idea of all the explanations she would have to make. Jeff was shockingly lacking in sympathy. All the time he was tying up the boat and collecting the cushions which the current fortunately carried in to the shore, he amused himself by telling all the things that would be said to her. As they stood for a moment at the top

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of the embankment looking to see whether the coast was clear, Jeff said cheerfully.

"I'll say Boulden is going to hate you after this."

"Hate *me*? I should think it's the other way round."

"Not a bit of it. You always hate the person who saw you make a fool of yourself."

"Well, that's about the last straw—I must say you look mighty cheerful about it." Philippa was really quite distinctly hurt. "It is one thing to be bored with a boy but quite another not to have him approve of *you*."

Jeff refused to be depressed.

"Why not? It's bad for little girls to have boys mushy about them. Besides—if you want to know—I think it was darned fresh of Boulden."

"There's my chance—nobody about now." Without another word Philippa ran for it. Somehow Jeff's last words—or rather the little flash of temper that accompanied them—made her, weighted down as she was with wet clammy clothes, quite comfortable. "I don't believe Jeff was a bit pleased to have Sam Boulden show me attention," she was thinking.

CHAPTER XVII

FOR some reason Philippa was astounded, outraged in her tenderest feelings, when she discovered that the Canadians did not celebrate the same Thanksgiving Day as the one in the United States. Moreover, it seemed to be a very tame affair, just a sort of Sunday injected into the middle of the week in the latter part of October.

"Before it's *time* to even begin thinking about Thanksgiving," she confided to Jeff the next time she saw him. "It's just silly. Oh, Jeff, do you suppose we could go home for Thanksgiving?"

"I don't know about you, of course. But I don't believe I can. You see, the schools here don't take our holiday into consideration and there would be a lot of work to make up and all. Besides, my father's going to be out home—all through his district."

"I suppose I'll have to give it up," Philippa said, sighing. "But it'll be *horrible*."

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Her depression seemed so great that Jeff was sympathetic.

"See here," he said, "I know something that——" Then he stopped himself decidedly. "No, I shouldn't have said anything about it. There isn't anything certain yet."

And to all Philippa's urging he would say nothing more than, "I forgot. I wasn't to say anything about it yet," and tried to change the subject. Philippa, finally, convinced that he was trying to tease her, was decidedly huffy. But her irritation only seemed to make Jeff highly amused.

"If you don't look out you'll lose your Privilege," he taunted her. "You can't expect me to want to come to see a girl who doesn't treat me any better than you do."

So the Canadian Thanksgiving for the Harvest passed with but faint interest from Philippa. But the sharp zest of the first cold weather of the winter diverted her when she did go back, although the old house—in spite of the double windows which had been hurriedly put on—was so cold during the night and early morning that getting out of her warm bed was an ordeal. It was fun to write

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home about having to break the ice in her pitcher to take her bath—the film of ice that had formed being just thick enough to make the statement true. And soon the first skating on the river quite drove everything else out of her mind. At home there was rarely more than a few days of skating the whole winter, and the pools in Rock Creek and the Tidal Basin were so crowded that the ice was cut to slush almost immediately. But here was a great smooth expanse and only a handful of school girls and school boys to take advantage of it. In her warm woolen stockings, short woolen skirt, thick sweater and the peaked woven woolen cap they called a “tuque,” she was a sparkling picture of the Joy of Winter. For the moment she lived through the days chiefly for the moment when she could get on the ice, to skate farther, faster than she had the day before and learn to cut a new figure on the ice.

Still, as the home Thanksgiving time drew near and letters from Washington were filled with regrets that she could not be home for the family dinner, she began to feel rather doleful about it. A thaw had set in; there was no more skating; the little town was gray

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and dreary and, when they went out for a walk, the girls came back with shoes caked with the mud of the crossings; Helen Odell was still angry at her. To Philippa, it was one of those periods when, try as she would to be cheerful, everything was "all horrible" to her.

On Monday, however, came the explanation of Jeff's mysterious hint. Mrs. Cherton had asked permission of Madame and of the head master of the Boys' School to have both the young Americans for dinner immediately after school on the real American Thanksgiving Day. Philippa was to spend the night. The days lagged until the last Thursday in November came. And every hour of that day was as twenty-four.

Jeff called for Philippa and, in full view of as many of the girls as could manage to be around, they walked gayly off together. As Mrs. Cherton's little gray stone house came in view Philippa said, pensively:

"Wasn't I a dumb-bell ever to think her house looked gloomy?"

"Just you wait until we're inside," said Jeff. "I began to smell Thanksgiving before I woke up this morning. It seems to me I'll

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go nutty if I have to wait another minute for that turkey."

Fortunately for Jeff's sanity, they didn't have to wait long. When the girl and boy followed Mrs. Cherton into the dining room with its homely cheerfulness, its glowing base-burner stove, its general air of snugness, Philippa burst out:

"Oh, I didn't know how jolly it would be just to have a *small* table. It makes so much difference somehow, and to know that things were got ready just for you. Just the smallest kind of a home is so much better than the finest kind of anything else. Dear me, I sound as if I had lost my mind, but perhaps you know what I mean."

"It doesn't matter—nothing matters when you're having soup like this. Oh, boy! it's *seasoned*. I don't know whether you've prayed over this soup, Mrs. Cherton, but you certainly have thought over it. I know it's got about fifty things in it and it couldn't have done without one of them. And croûtons—Hot dog!" Jeff subsided into blissful activity.

There were signs of commotion at the swinging door that led into the kitchen, which trembled visibly. Mrs. Cherton jumped up.

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"That's Chloe," she said. "She's determined to bring in the turkey, which I'm quite sure weighs more than she does. I'll have to help her. If I don't, she'll smash herself or the turkey."

She vanished into the kitchen, and the agitation of the door became more and more desperate. Jeff jumped up and opened the door and held it open. Thus old Chloe was disclosed, frail, white haired, trembling with excitement, more than half of her being old-fashioned black merino dress, clear-starched voluminous white apron, and belligerent cap strings. She was triumphant; the daring smile on her face showed that. For the huge platter with the richly browned turkey was before her and her old arms were presumably carrying it. But back of her was Mrs. Cherton, her arms inclosing both Chloe and platter, her face red with the effort and with suppressed laughter. How the platter was finally deposited on the table without breaking everything within radius of those shaking old arms was a miracle. But it was done, and Chloe, having achieved what, according to her code, Mrs. Cherton's old servant should accomplish, made a shaky little

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dip of curtsy and retired again to the kitchen. There she sat in state during subsequent proceedings, served with the best of the feast by the two children, and keeping up a running commentary on degenerate present conditions, interspersed with highly imaginary accounts of the past glories of Mrs. Cherton's house.

When they had reached plum pudding, and were contemplating a long session over nuts and raisins, Jeff said:

"If I eat enough for five, Mrs. Cherton, it's all your fault for exciting my imagination. When I conclude I've really had enough I look at that fruit centerpiece, and when I know I really can't eat any more there is the picture of those gorgeous grapes hanging on the wall. It isn't fair to prod a fellow so. Why, even the sideboard has apples and pears and things carved on it. And that picture of game hanging there—and the other one of fish—make me hungry all over again. Ten to one, if you started me all over again with broiled trout I'd eat right through another dinner."

"When we don't want you to eat, Jeff, we'll put you in a vacuum," said Philippa, smartly. "You'd be a mighty good subject for a hypnotist."

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Over the nuts and raisins, talk flowed on and on. Philippa got Mrs. Cherton to tell Jeff about her days in India. They prodded her with questions: Did the fakirs really make the mango plant grow before your eyes? Do men really dance on hot coals in their religious dances without getting burnt? What is Nirvana, anyway? And Philippa and Jeff contended with each other for the floor in telling everything funny that had happened. Judging by the spasms of laughter they must have been a witty party. The noise served as a slumber song to old Chloe, sunk in blissful peace.

"Do you see the snow—eh-h-h?" Mrs. Cherton said, at last. Floating down past the window were flakes of white. Thicker, faster they fell.

"Oh, that's just *perfect!* only I haven't my snowshoes yet."

"Are you thinking, Philippa child, that you'll snowshoe with just a few flakes on the ground?"

"Oh, but when there is enough, I'm afraid it'll take some time to get them down from Montreal. I'm sure there aren't the kind I want here."

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"Now if you'll just contain yourself, Miss Fast-and-furious, we'll see if there isn't a pair in the attic. You'll be a good girl until I can get up there—eh-h-h? And now, if you're quite through, Mr. Jeff, we'll make short work of the dishes, for if we don't Chloe 'll be uneasy in her slumber, thinking that she's going to do them. Now! All together!"

They had almost more fun cleaning up after the dinner than they had had eating it. To both children, so long away from home, the intimate connection with cold closets, pantry, hot soapy water, and clean tea towels the intimate connection with cold closets, They pranced around, laughing, singing, "kidding" each other, bombarding Mrs. Cherton with questions, feeling, somehow, though they couldn't have just expressed, packed into a soft, warm comfort of assurance that everything was well with themselves and everyone connected with them, that nothing would change except to march triumphantly to something gloriously better than anything they had ever known. The never-ceasing moving mass of snowflakes softly visible through the fading light of the windows added to the security and comfort.

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“As soon as we finish the dishes we’ll go and look for snowshoes,” Philippa chanted, happily. “And then perhaps you won’t mind if Jeff and I go out and race around in the snow a little. And *then* we’ll come back and sit by the fire and tell stories some more. And—oh, it makes things so much nicer, somehow, to be going to spend the night. No matter how glad you are to go home and how nice a place you have to go to—and I *do* like my room at the Château—still it *does* break things off when you have to leave, and that prevents you from feeling just as comfy as you might. So we’ll talk and talk.”

“And then perhaps you’ll go to bed, eh-h-h?”

“Oh yes, I suppose so—to bed—sometime. But, oh, I know I won’t want to go back to school to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XVIII

*B*UT when she got back to the school she found it wasn't so bad after all. All through the day's recitations the never-ceasing moving mass of snowflakes softly visible through the schoolroom windows carried with it a sense of something snug and cozy, affectionately wrapping about their little world.

Everyone, even the more stolid-seeming girls, showed that they felt the influence. Margaret Dixon spoke to Philippa between classes with an almost intimate tone; everyone in the little community seemed suddenly of more importance as if they were all going to have to depend on each other, separated from the rest of the world. After dinner Madame made the recreation hour a little longer than usual. While she told the little girls bed-time stories in her own room all the older girls sat around the fire in the drawing room and talked. Philippa, to whom trying to make things go was an inborn instinct, led off with

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stories of historic coasting seasons in Washington, D. C. It was noteworthy that while the Canadian girls had all the advantage of living in a country where winter sports have reached their climax, the narratives of the four or five days' coasting winter in the southern clime were far more exciting! The others, however, nobly seconded her efforts, even Helen Odell waking out of her abstraction enough to add a thrilling skiing episode. Bertha Ross cuddled close to Philippa in the pleasant warmth and Flora Brundage won a place against the younger Turner sister on the other side. It was interesting that Margaret Dixon, on the other side of the hearth, also had her devoted satellites of Effie White and one of the Ogilvie girls. The two groups faced each other like different camps.

All at once Philippa perceived that Flora Brundage was weeping, her head on Philippa's shoulder.

"What is the matter, Flora?" she asked a little crossly. *"I should think you'd be able to keep from being homesick one evening, any way, especially such a nice cozy evening as this."*

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"I was th-th-thinking how the s-s-snow was falling on my l-l-little b-b-brother's grave," Flora sobbed.

Philippa was aghast at her own callousness.

"Oh, Flora, I'm so sorry," she said softly. "When did he die? I wouldn't have hurt you for anything."

"Ten years ago," Flora said, with a certain mournful satisfaction. "I don't remember him, but I know j-j-just how his g-g-grave looks." She dribbled some more tears.

"Look here, Flora, if I were you," Philippa had begun when she met a twinkle in Margaret Dixon's eye. Then everybody laughed, Philippa joining in, in spite of herself. Flora was meekly hurt at first. But she was used to having the world seem unsympathetic, and soon forgot herself enough to laugh at a really very funny story that Margaret Dixon told.

All the next day it snowed so hard that Madame did not think it best to allow the girls out and the snow was falling as fast and thick as ever when Philippa went to bed. Philippa, whose snowshoes tantalizingly faced her on the wall of her room, went to sleep dismally convinced that she would *never* get a chance to use them. But the next morn-

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ing!—— The sun was shining; the air was dry and sharp; it was the Saturday holiday! Nothing could have been better. She hurried through the special Saturday putting-her-room-in-order; and Mademoiselle Mimi came upon her outside the house trying to fasten her snowshoes on at half-past nine o'clock.

"But do you American girls expect to do everything without instruction! You cannot wear regular shoes, Phileépa, now with hard soles and heels ——"

"But I haven't anything else; I can't wait to go to the store and my feet would freeze in sneakers."

"Yes, truly. We will go back and find some moccasins which you can put on, and then I will give you a lesson. But you have forgotten your over-stockings."

"Oh, Mademoiselle, it can't be cold enough for those big heavy things. I'll look so clumsy in them."

"You will have to forget your American smartness if you wish to go snowshoeing in Canada. There is a smartness in wearing just the most sensible clothes. *Tiens!* Wait until I costume you *à la Canadienne.*"

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When they started out Philippa padded along softly in gaily decorated Indian moccasins over heavy ribbed woolen stockings that seemed to her as stiff as boards. Her thick woolen tuque was drawn well down over her ears; the collar of her fur coat was turned up almost to her nose and thick mittens were on her hands. They practically slid down the embankment to the bed of the frozen river, for drifts of snow made it impossible to locate the steps.

"Now there is really nothing to tell you but just to walk," said Mademoiselle, wrapping the thongs of her own snowshoes about her ankles. "The one thing that will trouble you is that you will tread with one snowshoe on the other. Then you will trip yourself up and perhaps go floundering into the snow. That you may not do that you must keep your feet very far apart; and you must make your body light as if you were running, with the weight on the balls of your feet. *Va!* There is nothing now but to go. Oh, yes, and not to let the thongs be either too tight or too loose. Try to walk as if you were bow-legged."

From the beginning Philippa loved it. It

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seemed like a miracle to be borne up on the surface of snow so light that a slight puff of wind sent a miniature blizzard swirling in all directions. It was like the possession of a sixth sense. It was impossible to merely walk; in her exhilaration Philippa ran.

"Why, it's just no trick at all to learn to use snow-shoes," she called out over her shoulder. "I thought it would take some time to get used to it, like skating." In her exultation she gave a sort of skip. And in that moment she went down. Before Mademoiselle could catch up with her she had wallowed around in the deep snow, tripping herself up every time she tried to get on her feet. She was almost buried in it when Mademoiselle, giving her both hands, managed to drag her to her feet.

"But I am glad that you laugh," said Mademoiselle, as Philippa could hardly brush herself off for laughter.

"How can anyone do anything else?"

"They can," said Mademoiselle. "But it is not those of whom one would choose a companion."

After a little, when Philippa had proved able to manage the "tennis rackets," as she in-

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sisted on calling the snowshoes, Mademoiselle Mimi said reflectively:

"I believe it would not be too much for you if we took a real walk to the Manor. It is when one makes a real expedition that the full charm of snowshoeing is felt. It is then that one feels that one is truly a '*coureur de bois*' making his way through trackless forests where no white man has ever trod before."

"Which way will we go?"

Before Mademoiselle had an opportunity to answer this, Margaret Dixon overtook them. By this time most of the girls from the Château were out and a group of the boys were skylarking about not far from the girls.

"——And Miss Shelby is not yet there," soliloquized Mademoiselle. "And what is to prevent them from playing together? And why should they not? It is only that in this small place there are tongues. But I must not yet leave them ——"

"Philippa," said Margaret Dixon bluntly, "you said you would introduce me to your friend. Now's a good time."

"Of course," Philippa sped toward Jeff, smiling to herself. "If she wants to know

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him so much you'd think she would speak to him without being 'introduced.' They are so formal and yet they don't stop at anything to get their own way. Won't Jeff be amused?"

But when Jeff was informed of the honor that awaited him he didn't find anything funny in it at all. He said, "Oh, certainly," settled his cap at a smarter angle and squared his shoulders with quite a jaunty air. As they drew near to Margaret, however, he looked slightly crestfallen. "Oh, is it that one?" he asked in as low a tone as he could manage. "I don't mind, of course, but, while you're about it, why don't you introduce me to the other one, the one with the pink cheeks and—oh, the pretty one in the blue sweater and blue tuque?"

The "pretty one" was evidently Bertha Ross.

"All right, I will," said Philippa kindly. "She's an awfully nice girl, too."

Both the introductions were performed. Nobody could possibly have interpreted Margaret Dixon's solid gravity as meaning exquisite pleasure, and she seemed to have nothing to say to Jeff when the rite was performed. But presumably she was satisfied. Bertha,

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with flushing cheeks and sparkling blue eyes, was the one who drew Jeff's attention and he walked off with the two girls, but at Bertha's side.

"I don't believe Jeff is as indifferent to girls as he used to be," thought Philippa, not altogether pleased. "Why, I used to have to talk and talk to him to make him polite at all to Anne 'n' Virginia." She walked by Mademoiselle's side very thoughtfully for a few moments. Then she saw Miss Shelby.

"Oh, *now* we can start off to the Manor, can't we?" she asked Mademoiselle eagerly.

It seemed only a minute or so before the girls and boys had dropped out of their lives and they were alone on the frozen river walking, light as thistledown over two feet or so of snow. The embankment, for a time, hid the houses along the bank from them, walking just under it as they were. For a time there was nothing in Philippa's life but the buoyant joy of walking and the beauty of the softly billowing whiteness everywhere, against the white the overweighted branches of the willows of the embankment and the rambling farm buildings on the island opposite—otherwise indistinguishable from the ice-bound

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river—were all sharp black and white; the world, it would seem, had no half-tones. Against the whiteness even Mademoiselle's fair skin looked swarthy, and the pink in her cheeks was a wintry red.

The bank became lower and lower, the unmarred whiteness of fields followed, broken only by the projecting posts of fences. Mademoiselle turned to her left. Philippa could not have told they had reached the Little River. But soon they came to the overarching trees that fringed it. It was almost like going into a tunnel.

It seemed incredible it could be the bed of the chattering little stream they were treading on; the silence was unbroken except for themselves, and they unconsciously hushed their own voices that sounded deafening in the soundlessness; Philippa's laugh was like a cannonade which would arouse all of the tiny wood creatures into fear that their strongholds were being attacked. They fell to talking almost in whispers. And yet Philippa had never felt such sparkling gayety in her life.

Her sense of well being, of superabundant health and vigor, was so perfect that she

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stared at Mademoiselle in stupefaction when that young lady suddenly grabbed up a handful of snow and began vigorously rubbing her companion's cheek. At first Philippa thought it was some sudden, extraordinary playfulness of Mademoiselle—nothing of the sort could be really impossible that day. But the gravity and sense of purpose with which the chafing was done soon convinced her that Mademoiselle was not being frolicsome.

"Wh-wha-what?" she gasped.

"Your cheek was frost-bitten. If I hadn't rubbed it with snow it would have been really frozen."

"But it couldn't have been." Philippa spoke half indignantly. "I was perfectly comfortable. I didn't feel anything at all."

"Of course not. You never do feel anything when any part of you is frozen; it's when it thaws out that it's painful."

"But how could you tell?"

"Your cheek, from being red, turned perfectly white. Whenever you see the cheek or nose of anyone you are walking with turn white, you must do what I did. If there isn't any ice or snow within reach, use cold water."

"Gosh!" Philippa was much impressed. "I

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didn't realize that anything could happen to you on a day like this."

"It's when the woods in winter are most beautiful that they are the most dangerous."

"I wouldn't be surprised at anything we would discover to-day," Philippa said, after a time. "Nobody has been here before us to-day. It's so *new*. Anything might happen."

"Think of the '*coureurs de bois*' going on like this, day after day, week after week, through country that was absolutely strange to them and that held death from Indian or wild beast in wait for them unless they were almost superhumanly alert and powerful."

They had come to a spot where the trees on either side of their white causeway were tall and stately. A turn in the stream walled them in with great arches where the white tracery on intertwining limbs were like intricate vaulting in a Gothic cathedral. Philippa stood still and looked about her with awe in her face.

"I wonder —— Would just the need to make a living keep them at it. Might they not have felt—this? Wouldn't that be a sort of religion?"

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"Perhaps it would." Mademoiselle looked at the girl beside her with surprise. That was a side of the American girl she had not encountered before.

They were rather silent on the way back.

Just as they turned the corner they had an encounter, Mr. Ross Cuthbert, looking notably handsome in rough tweed knickerbockers, shaggy mackinaw, fur cap, heavy ribbed woolen stockings and moccasins, came striding toward them on snowshoes. He bowed to them both with some constraint, although, as Philippa opened the flood-gates of her conversation on him, he talked very pleasantly to her. When they reached the Château Mademoiselle said, hastily:

"Now run in quickly, Phileépa, so you can change your stockings if they are the least bit wet before luncheon."

Philippa, a little irritated at being dismissed in this manner, did not obey with any remarkable speed and not without a backward glance. She heard the young man say:

"But I thought you would surely be there. And this is the first snowshoeing of the year. Perhaps you have forgotten that it was last ——"

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“Oh, I wonder if Mr. Ross Cuthbert has been out to the Manor. I’m so sorry we didn’t keep on. It would have been ever so much fun.” Philippa was much pleased with herself at the way she had sustained the conversation. “It’s much easier to talk to grown-up men than to boys. What an egg that Sam Boulden was the day we went rowing. But Mademoiselle can’t be accustomed to talk much to young men; I guess she doesn’t have much experience. It’s a shame she should be so sort of stiff and constrained when she does meet one. I’m sure if she would be as nice and jolly to them as she is to us girls sometime one of them would really fall in love with her.”

CHAPTER XIX

A^T the conclusion of the class in sight translation one day Madame made a little announcement. On the coming Friday evening there was to be a *soirée*, the first of the year, to which the people of Lanoraie were to be invited. Mademoiselle Mimi was preparing a musical program in which certain of her students would take part; Madame herself was to give a little impersonation. At this point Philippa interrupted, saying: "Oh, that'll be trick. I just know ——" and then crimsoned with embarrassment because the girls were regarding her with amazement. Madame, however, smiled at her in understanding sympathy and went on outlining the program. She would like to have some scenes from the play they had just read given in French, and would like to have Philippa and Helen take part ——"

"Oh, but, Madame," Philippa burst out,

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"I'd just *love* to do it if it were only in English. But I don't believe I could in French. Why, I get all twisted up in the simplest sentences every little while! I'd break down and spoil it all."

"I think not, Phileépa," Madame smiled. "I wouldn't ask you if I thought you couldn't. And Helen will help you. Helen has been our stand-by with our little plays."

Afterward Philippa wondered whether Madame had planned it or if it was one of the things that just happened, that Helen Odell was drawn back into the little circle of school life by means of the dramatics. Certainly, nothing had interested her in the school life before that year. And she was definitely interested in the play. In going over their lines together in the evenings after school, something of the old intimacy was restored. There were cozy times in Helen's luxurious rooms; sometimes there were little feasts over the good things that Mr. and Mrs. Odell sent, by the hamperful, every week. And the good times were more wholesome, somehow, than the ones at the beginning of their friendship, when Philippa, after an evening of feverish confidences from Helen, would steal off to

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her own room, feeling vaguely that she had been doing something wrong.

The *soirée* began to be the all-absorbing center of life at the Château. Even Helen Odell, scorning herself all the while for being interested in anything so trivial when she had her romance to agonize over, was excited. She had a genuine literary interest and she loved anything approaching the dramatic. As for Philippa, except at stated intervals, when letters from home brought the inevitable wave of longing for home, life in the little French school in the tiny town of Lanoraie, in the heart of French Canada, was fast absorbing all of her vivid interest. The little humors, pleasures, disappointments of everyday filled her horizon. A good recitation sent her away from class happy; a poor one frightfully depressed her. Increasingly friendly relations with Margaret Dixon pleased her immensely, although she never ceased contemplating Margaret with the curious respect which one accords to some admirable but unfamiliar piece of mechanism. Margaret infallibly did everything that was exactly opposite to what Philippa would have done under the same circumstances. Bertha Ross's evi-

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dent liking for her made another strong interest; it was such fun to go adventuring day by day deeper into a new friendship. By degrees she was beginning to know all the girls; it was a question to be exhaustively debated whether Jean Ogilvie or Ruth Jamison was in the right in their recent disagreement; and she could hardly get to sleep one night because the little Turner girl had a sore throat which someone thought might be diphtheria.

So Philippa's heart beat fast with excitement as she put on her afternoon dress for dinner the evening of the *soirée*; a caucus of the girls had previously decided that they would dress before rather than after dinner, although Effie White had come out strong in opposition. As Philippa dressed she went desperately over her lines, saying out loud phrases that especially troubled her; carrying the final consonant of one word over to the next word when it began with a vowel was one of the things that she often tripped up on. At dinner she couldn't eat much because her heart was beating so hard it seemed to fill up all the space in her interior so snugly that there was no room for food. Evening prayers she hardly realized had been held; the interim

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between prayers and the coming of the guests was filled in with snatches of rehearsals that convinced everybody concerned that their parts were going to be a complete failure.

Yet, Madame, introducing her flock to the village dignitaries as they straggled in, was conscious of a passing disrespectful mental comment to the effect that she much preferred the appearance of the rosy, bright-eyed girls to the august ones, awe of whom was making the bosoms of her pupils palpitate and the faces flush. In their simple dainty frocks of crêpe or taffeta, much less extreme in cut than would have prevailed at any place but the Château, with an extra perfection as to arrangement of their hair and a deeper flush upon their cheeks than would have been true at another time, they filled her with pride.

"Mes cheres petites enfants," she thought to herself; she always made such confidences to herself in French. "By how much is their very bashful awkwardness more pleasing than the firm assurance of my neighbors that no one can approach them who is not an inferior." And Madame, even Madame who was actually in the eyes of her girls incapable of human error, had much ado to keep from

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laughing when Mrs. Austin—who had been a Cuthbert—bestowed an inclination of the head upon Bertha Ross that was little short of an apostolic benediction.

Philippa, although she didn't realize it until afterward, was possessed of a sort of dual personality that evening. With one side of her she groveled in spirit before the august ones. With the other, she was racking her brains to remember whether any of her mother's friends had ever sat metaphorically upon a dais as Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Benham, her cousin, did.

Why at home, even that lady whose husband is in the Cabinet was just nice and chummy. And she was rich and 'way up in the Administration' 'n' everything and her family always had been like that, ever so far back. And there's Jeff's father. He was written up in the paper as one of the most influential men in the Senate. Just try to think of him looking as pompous as that old Colonel Somebody! But somehow these people almost make you think they *are* great and important. You have to treat them the way they think of themselves—it's right down queer. They come into the room as if they

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knew only too well that everybody would be watching them; and they speak to Madame and each other as if everything they said was so important it was going to be telegraphed all over by the Associated Press (I think that's what sent the news around about Daddy's bill). It makes me think of Cranford ——"

At this point Philippa's observations ceased, for Mr. Ross Cuthbert came into the room.

"I certainly would never have expected him to come," she thought, much fluttered. "I wish I'd gone up to the attic and got my other afternoon dress out of the trunk. Anybody would think I was seventeen in that dress."

Mr. Ross Cuthbert was in evening clothes and looked really distinguished. "Now he does look as if he was a little better than other people; but not as if he thought he was. I wonder how he can stay in a little place like this now that his arm is out of the sling. I shouldn't think there would be much to do here and I'm sure he isn't rich. And that suit can't be new because it isn't pinched in at the waist like Bayard's. Bayard said they all had to be that way now. Maybe men don't

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have the same fashions in Canada. Anyway he looks stunning. Oh, he is coming over here to speak to me—what will the girls think?”

The young man's smile was very pleasant as he began to ask Philippa whether she had ever been snowshoeing before the day he had met her with Mademoiselle, and how she liked it. Philippa, immensely flattered, was perfectly ready to tell him minutely all she had ever thought or experienced in the matter of snowshoeing. Out of the corner of her eye she could see that the girls near her were unable to keep their eyes from wandering in her direction. She passionately wished that he would sit down beside her. When he did finally commit that radical act her conversational powers were, for the moment, quite paralyzed, so filled was she with pride and vain-glory. The music, which began the program, lessened the strain of holding up her end of the polite dialogue. She had all the glory of her unique position without the crushing responsibility.

The Turner sisters, cold with fear, opened the program with a piano duet. As they proceeded and, contrary to their fears, did not

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break down, the tense expression of their faces relaxed, and they wound up in a perfect thunder of happy noise, bowing, with gratified red faces, their appreciation of the applause. The only violinist of the school followed; and Philippa, one of whose classes was in a room adjoining the music room and who hence had reason to fear the sounds that proceed from that violin, was immensely relieved when the selection concluded and there had been only a few notes to make the sensitive shiver. Flora Brundage sang very sweetly. At the conclusion of her song Philippa led a rapturous and determined clapping.

"Do clap as hard as you can," she said, aside to Mr. Ross Cuthbert. "It'll be good for her. She's so homesick that she cries all the time."

But when Flora came back to sing a second time Philippa was sorry she had been instrumental in getting her an encore. Flora elected to sing, "Home, Sweet Home." Knowing it was just a question of time when Flora's tears would begin to flow, Philippa, after exchanging a significant glance with the young man, braced herself to await the inevitable. It came before Flora had progressed more

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than two or three bars. Filling eyes—wavering voice—heartbroken sobs—Flora progressed through all three stages before she was finally led from the room by Mademoiselle, who was the accompanist. But all the Lanoraie ladies clapped heartily to cover her retreat, exchanging glances of heartfelt sympathy and approval:

“Poor girl! Poor girl—eh-h-h!” they said, a note of melancholy approbation in their voices.

“Now I think Flora is just silly,” thought Philippa, in much disgust at this blot on the evening. If Mrs. Cherton had been able to come this evening she’d see how funny it is. If Flora can’t stop bawling all the time she ought not to stay here, even if her father and mother have gone off missionarying somewhere where they can’t take her. If she’s got to stay she ought to learn to control herself better.”

Then some one gave a gasp. A queer figure had entered the rooms, somebody who wore Angelique’s familiar Sunday clothes donned usually only to go to mass. But the face under the dreary purple hat was undoubtedly Madame’s. Yet—somehow—it was An-

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gelique who, gesticulating violently with hands, arms, shoulders, burst into a flood of Canuck French, her voice a perfect replica of Angelique's strident guttural. The theme of the discourse was a dissertation—from the angle of Angelique—on certain characteristics, not only of the young ladies of the Château but of the Lanoraie notables gathered before her. Delicious fun it was; but the sly digs were always at some minor peculiarity; there was nothing harsh or cruel. As each girl received her own particular thrust she giggled rapturously; Angelique, in the doorway, watching the travesty of herself, was the most delighted of all. The August Ones laughed as helplessly as the rest. But the most extraordinary thing of all was to see Madame, while reminiscent ripples of amusement were still going round the room, re-enter, in her soft black frock, demurely remote as ever.

"Gosh," Philippa thought. "I didn't know she was like that. Why—she's got so many different kinds of things in her."

At this moment Madame signaled to Philippa that it was time for her scene from Moliere's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" with

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Helen Odell. The costume that was to be donned to change Philippa into Monsieur Jourdain was a man's dressing gown and a pair of huge carpet slippers. And Helen, by dint of assuming a man's overcoat and a tall silk hat stood revealed as the learned sycophant who had come to teach the *bourgeois gentilhomme de la grammaire*.

The audience sat back in patient expectation of the usual boredom when two school-girls, struggling with a foreign language, proceed more or less painfully through a conventional little act. But soon they were sitting up in surprised interest. Philippa was actually funny; even in the guise of the rosy young girl they could see the simple, vulgar, incredibly gullible little man, enchanted to learn that, without knowing how accomplished he was, he had been speaking all his life that which he had supposed was the art of the literary elect—"prose." And Helen, as the penniless charlatan, preying on the rich plebeian's credulity, gave a real impersonation. The girls kept their audience alert and interested and drew hearty laughs. They had to come back at the end and bow, hand in hand, in response to surprisingly full applause.

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When Philippa returned to the room, she darted a glance at the place that Mr. Ross Cuthbert had occupied to see whether he was still there. To prove that he was, he came smilingly forward to congratulate her and ask if he could not get her some refreshments.

Philippa, trying not to show how flattered she was, permitted him to serve her.

"I always thought girls were silly to want to grow up and have attention," she thought while he was absent. "But it really is much nicer than I had supposed it was." The girls began to come up and tell her how well she had done. Her dramatic success and Mr. Ross Cuthbert's notice of her made the smaller girls look at her with positive awe, the older girls with some envy. Philippa wasn't a bit displeased. She was very kind to them, and friendly. But her mind was far away, building a romance for herself in which Mr. Ross Cuthbert figured. A fervid heroine of modern fiction would probably not have considered it a romance at all. It consisted of various nebulous scenes wherein the young Seigneur should show an increasing appreciation of the qualities and charms that Philippa—now that she was castle building in

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earnest—was quite sure she possessed. It consisted of the mental rehearsal of dialogues in which there were many pretty speeches—founded on the best types of romance on the part of Mr. Cuthbert and various witty and coquettish retorts compounded of the style of repartee of Philippa's favorite heroines as well as of Philippa's own rapidly envolving sense of the effective. There were glimpses of various poetic and highly flattering scenes culminating in a spectacular church wedding in which the bride's dress and the color scheme of the bridesmaids' frocks were far more distinct than the expression on the groom's face; and the final scene ended sharply with the donning of an extraordinarily smart traveling suit and driving off accompanied by the most beautiful black leather traveling bag and the most slenderly rolled silk umbrella that the mind of mortal can conceive, a huge brass-studded wardrobe trunk having gone on before. That going-away taxi was so pervaded by the fragrance of expensive leather that there was no place in it for anything but a highly compact and inactive lay figure of a bridegroom.

Still the vision was concrete enough to

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make her blush a little when Mr. Cuthbert returned with a cup of chocolate—with whipped cream on it—and a fairly satisfactory collection of sandwiches and cakes. Being really very hungry, Philippa forgot her romance completely and omitted to drop the pearls of conversation in the young man's way that should prove to him what a highly superior girl of fifteen she was—practically seventeen in fact. When her hunger was partially satisfied, however, she could not fail to notice that the young Seigneur was beginning to look rather distraught and not a little glum. At last he gave a perceptible start and forgetting Philippa altogether, made for the hall in which the figure of Mademoiselle was momentarily disclosed. As he joined her the upward look, half blissful, half reproachful which she gave him, and the hunger which made its way through the trained impassiveness of his English face, brought enlightenment even to Philippa's childish mind, clogged as it was with her vain and fanciful little dreams. She couldn't help watching them. Mademoiselle, on her way out into the pantry for more cakes, much flushed, gave a guilty look toward Madame in the drawing room,

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shook her head violently at the young man and hurried on. With a determined scowl he strode after her. A glance at Madame showed her perturbed.

“Why—they’re in love with each other—Mademoiselle and Mr. Ross Cuthbert! But why don’t they come out and show it to everybody? And why do they look so unhappy about it. And Madame, too ——? He—said that day at the manor that Madame wasn’t in the habit of consulting him much. And he said it in a queer sort of way—I noticed it at the time. It’s—it’s like Helen—only it can’t really be the same at all. Because Mr. Ross Cuthbert is all right. I know he is *fine*. But—*but that means he doesn’t like me at all!* Well—what did he pretend he did for? Coming up to me and talking to me before everybody and bringing me refreshments and sitting by me ‘n’ everything? I—don’t—think—it—was—a—bit—nice—of—him.”

Tears were very near her eyes—but anger at the idea that they might be near burned them up. The idea of *crying* over anything like that. Suppose anyone should think she was! Suppose the girls thought she was

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mashed on him—that would be too horrible for words. She'd show them.

“No, I don't believe they could think that.” Saner councils prevailed. “I'm sure I never said a word about him to anybody. And I can be as indifferent as anything if they say anything about his having sat by me all the evening.” She brightened up. The cloud was passing. When such a highly nebulous romance is dissolved there isn't much pain about it. In a minute Philippa was constructing a new one—strikingly like the old one, it must be admitted—much the same incidents—she couldn't change her mind about the wedding dress in such a hurry—or the colors of the bridesmaids—only now she wore a bridesmaid's dress and Mademoiselle was the bride. And there was a very agreeable usher whom she was to walk with, well furnished with good-looking clothes and very nice manners but with features so indistinct that he might be said to have none. Only he did appreciate Philippa. And at the ball that followed the wedding he wanted to dance all the dances with her. And the guests were green with envy.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN Philippa opened her eyes the next morning—unwilling for some minutes to admit that it was really the rising bell that had aroused her—it was a pervading sense of vacancy.

“What is it that’s the matter?” she asked herself. And when a tide of recollection brought her discovery of Mr. Ross Cuthbert’s interest in Mademoiselle, Philippa sighed with an intense conviction that life was a very unsatisfactory business. A look out of the window completed her disillusionment. It was darker than it should be at that hour ——

“Oh, dear! It’s going to rain. I know it is. And there’ll be no more snowshoeing. And there’ll be no use building the toboggan slide Margaret Dixon was going to start to-day—Oh, dear, everything’s going to be all horrible!”

She lay still for a longer time than was at

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all wise after the rising bell. She knew it but she didn't care. She was in a sullen mood of dislike for everything. For some weeks the young Seigneur had made a gallant figure in her imagination; and for several days she had been quite thrilled about him. Life was drab without that center of interest. The excitement of discovering that Mademoiselle was having a romance was gone; she liked Mademoiselle Mimi very much, but she couldn't be really as thrilled thinking about her and Mr. Ross Cuthbert as she had been in thinking about Mr. Ross Cuthbert and herself. And the usher at their wedding who was to be so crazy about Philippa was unconvincingly dim this morning.

"And if I don't get up now I'll be late to breakfast and be marked down in attendance," she thought vindictively. "The same dreary old round of things will have to begin all over again."

At breakfast there was a sudden wave of Christmas plans. Christmas was now little more than two weeks off, but excitement over snowshoeing and the *soirée* had kept Christmas a little in the background. But this morning, apparently, nobody could think about

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anything else. Philippa at first was inclined to be superior to such childish enthusiasm, and blasé. But the breakfast was excellent and she was hungry and soon she caught fire and was boasting about all the thrilling things that were going to happen when she went home for the holidays every time Margaret Dixon and Effie White let her get anything in.

Naturally she waited for the morning mail with thrilled expectation. By now plans for the holiday parties would be being made; perhaps the girls would be writing her about them; certainly there would be a letter from Muzz who hadn't written for several days. When Madame handed Philippa quite a satisfactory bunch of letters, the girl retired joyfully to her room to read them.

"Maybe when I go home I can stay." It really did seem as if her heart leaped at the thought.

The one from her mother she opened first. At the beginning it referred mysteriously to "Doreen's news" which, it said, "Doreen would tell herself." Philippa glanced at Doreen's letter but decided to finish Mother's first. But, as she read on, her eyes widened in incred-

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ulous horror. "Of course, I've got to go home Christmas. Why—if I didn't—what'd I *do*? I couldn't *live* through Christmas up here away from the family—They can't want me to come very much or they wouldn't think of such a thing—I'll write right away and tell them that I've *got* to come!"

She read the letter over again hoping that her mother had spoken less positively than she had at first thought. But she couldn't gather any encouragement. This incredible thing was true. She couldn't go home Christmas. There wouldn't be any Christmas in their own dear house, any Christmas tree, any hanging up of stockings—anything. Bayard wouldn't be home. The house would be closed. She said this over and over to herself to make its desolation seem real.

She had not seen her Grandmother Gale for a long time so she could not, perhaps, be expected to feel much grief at the thought she was so very ill. At first she just thought of herself.

"I don't believe I can possibly stand it," she said over and over.

But—All at once she remembered that her mother had said something about Doreen, and

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about La's family "naturally wanting" her. That was queer.

"I suppose I'd better read Doreen's letter."

Perhaps there was some sort of premonition in Philippa's mind for she read Doreen's news almost indifferently.

"I suppose I might have known that Doreen would get engaged to La'. It's just somebody else who isn't going to care anything about me any more. Every single thing in the world is changed."

By this time she had reached the very bottom of her cup of sorrow. She couldn't waste any more wonder or emotion. The end of all hope had come. She sat looking drearily ahead of her. When the tears started to come she forced them back. "It won't do any good. And there's nobody to care—much." Madame would care. But it would just be some more work for her to do, getting me straightened out. And that wouldn't be fair. She has enough. Probably she's worried about Mademoiselle. Everybody's worried about somebody—I suppose Daddy and Muzz wouldn't feel comfortable if they didn't go to Grandmother Gale when she's so ill. They have to. They can't help thinking of her instead of

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me. But there isn't anyone to go to her—not really. I've got to stand it by myself."

It was a strange hour that Philippa spent sitting alone in the little room that had already become a sort of part of herself. She looked straight out through the window, the rest of her letters, from the girls, lying unopened in her lap. She didn't dare open them yet. Of course, they would be all about the Christmas parties unless they already knew she wasn't coming home; and if Anne 'n' Virginia knew that the letters would be full of lamentations. She couldn't stand either thing.

So she didn't think very much, perhaps. But she did keep herself from crying. She stared straight ahead of her just feeling conscious of an ache that meant a sorrow that seemed to her too big to be borne, but that she was conscious that she was somehow bearing, after a time without much outcry or great bitterness—the very first sorrow she had ever faced alone.

CHAPTER XXI

“*WHAT* is it that’s wrong?” Philippa asked herself the next morning in that instant, after the first instinctive groping after mislaid happiness, when one asks oneself the meaning of a lurking sense of tragedy. Then it all came back to her.

“I suppose I can live through Christmas somehow,” she told herself, soberly. Then she turned over and hid her face in the pillow and lay silent a long time.

There was not much pleasure in lying in bed that morning, although generally it was a matter of congratulation when she woke up early enough to experience the luxury of an extra nap. So she was dressed, and all of the before-breakfast chores done, and settled in a rather gray mood at her algebra, when there came a tap at the door. It was Bertha Ross, her pretty face all flushed with excitement.

“Look here, Philippa,” she said, evidently

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not taking any chances on having her courage get away from her before she had carried out her purpose, "is there any chance at all of your not getting home for Christmas?"

"Why, what made you ask that?" Philippa was staring straight at Bertha in complete surprise.

"Something Madame said—perhaps it was something your mother wrote her—made me think there might be—I don't know—I just had a *feeling* about it. And I had been thinking that I would just *love* to have you. So—I just had to come right in and ask you."

"Oh, but I can't go. I —— *Maybe I can.* Oh, it's just almost funny that you should have when I was feeling ——" She didn't finish her sentence, but Bertha understood. "I just had a letter saying my mother and father would have to go away. It's the first Christmas I ever remember ——"

Wise little Bertha felt that this was the moment to explain to Philippa just what sort of a place she might be going to.

"You see, I live in the country," she said, looking at Philippa a little apologetically.

"That's trick."

By this time Bertha had learned "trick"

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was a term of rapturous approval. She looked relieved.

"Well, you know, some of the girls here look down on people who live in the country."

"It's the only way to live," Philippa said, with calm conviction. "When I'm grown up I'll never live any other place. And I've always been *mad* to be in the country in the winter—oh, boy, but it'll be great!"

Bertha curled herself up on Philippa's bed with great content.

"We really do have awfully good times," she said, eagerly. "Especially at Christmas time. You see, Bostwick is just a little settlement of English families; it isn't even a town, just about twenty estates strung along the road half a mile or so apart. We get our mail at Sainte Mélanie, which is three or four miles away, but we are all English people who have lived there for generations. We have our own church, and tutors and governesses teach us until we are old enough to go away to school. And, do you know, my father, who has been in England a lot—he has some property over there—says we are more English than the English people. He says we've been 'stiffnecked' enough to keep alive many of the

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old customs that have been forgotten in England—in many parts of England, anyway. And we come out strong at Christmas ——”

“Oh, do you have Christmas waits and a Yule-log ’n’ everything?”

“We certainly do. And the roast pig with an apple in his mouth and plum pudding brought in with the brandy blazing all around it. And everybody gives parties during holiday week. And I’m the only young girl in the whole place just now who is away at school, so everybody does things for me.”

“Oh, then I’ll probably wear my party dress ——”

“You’d just better bring everything like that you’ve got. The chances are that everything you have will be worn to *ribbons*, dancing.”

“Oh, what *fun!*” said Philippa, rapturously. Then she had a moment of uncomfortable caution. “But you’ll have to wait, won’t you, to write home and find out if your father ’n’ mother are willing?”

“No, indeed! They said I could invite anyone Madame would agree to. And I know she’ll agree to you. The girls are all getting

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jealous of you because Madame thinks you're just about the nicest girl here ——"

"Oh, she doesn't!" Philippa was shocked and yet enchanted.

"I'm sure she does. You ought to hear the lovely things she says about you."

"Oh, tell me!"

"No, I don't think we ought to repeat things Madame says. She doesn't give you last-go swaps you know. She's different."

"Yes, I know." Philippa was rather scandalized at her own lack of delicacy, and liked Bertha better for the scruple. "I just wanted to know—I knew it would make me feel better. I was just awfully blue when you came in."

"Oh, if that's it! I think you're going to be one of the most popular girls in the school. I've wanted to be real friends with you from the first, but you seemed so awfully clever. You use so many words that I don't know at all."

"Oh dear!" Philippa laughed disgustedly. "That just always does stand in my way. At home I had an awful time when I first went to school because the girls said I was stuck up. They said I had 'swallowed the dictionary.'

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It took me the longest time to live it down. It's a kind of family failing, I suppose. My father is an awfully silent man, generally. But when he gets started on anything he is really interested in you *never* heard anything like the flow of words. He never hesitates—always the right one, you know, that means exactly what he wants to say. He doesn't use the words that everybody is using—you know—the same word for everything. He says that's lazy. I must say, I do that. But I suppose I've inherited something of his love for words—or just absorbed it. Then, too, I used to do nothing but read at one time; and words sort of stuck to me. But it's stood in my way lots of times, you know. But, honestly, it doesn't mean that I *know* anything, you know."

"I'm so glad because I like you so much and I'm not very clever myself. I really feel as if you were going to be my best friend. And I know you'll have a good time. My brother wrote asking me to be sure to bring a girl who had some *go*. You see, last year I took an awfully nice girl home with me, but she was very quiet and didn't dance very well or talk much—didn't keep things lively ——"

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"I know. Didn't have any 'pep.'" Philippa's face, as she diagnosed the difficulty, was as grave as though she were the consulting physician for some serious malady. She began to feel that she had a great responsibility. "Well, I hope they won't be disappointed in me."

"I'm sure they won't. Do come with me and ask Madame now."

Philippa caught Bertha's hand and held it for a moment just as she was ready to jump down from the bed:

"Oh, Bertha," she said, "if I could only make you understand how I feel! Just terribly grateful. When you came in—I can't tell you about it now. But—I do really think it was the very darkest moment of my life."

CHAPTER XXII

WITH Madame's immediate assent and her assurance that she felt quite sure there could be no objection from the Gale family, and her promise to write to them, there was no obstacle to Philippa's indulging in her favorite pursuit of castle building in the eighteen days that elapsed before the Christmas holidays began.

One thing that she especially looked forward to was the sleigh ride they would have to Bostwick if the roads permitted. There had been alternate thaw and freeze since the big Thanksgiving Day snow and the roads were, at night, rough and icy and slush and mud after the sun's rays had done their work. So Philippa longed fervidly for a good snow-storm, and Bertha followed suit, although, since the journey was an old story to her, taking the rather roundabout way by train

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did not seem so tragic to her as it did to Philippa.

Christmas presents prevented Philippa from passing quite all of her time thinking of the glories to come and agonizing about the weather. At first she was horrified to hear that any packages she might send would probably be stopped at the boundary line and held up for customs. It was nothing short of a tragedy if she could not get some message to her home people. Discussion with Jeff brought forward a solution to this difficulty. He was to meet his father somewhere near the line to spend the holidays with him in their old home in Michigan. His father knew the customs people and would see that Philippa's gifts were started on their way in the United States. So Philippa fell frantically to work to get her gifts made in time. Of course, she didn't get everything done; there never yet had been a Christmas that she had. But she did have something for all the family that she had made, and a few characteristically Canadian things like tiny birch-bark canoes to use for penholders and miniature snowshoes, which she had bought in the town for the girls. If she sent five corners for dining table strips

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instead of the necessary eight to her mother, she had the assurance that her gift would be appreciated just the same.

Two days before they were to start for Bostwick, there came a heavy snowstorm and Philippa was in the seventh heaven of delight. But following that there was a sudden drop in temperature until the thermometer registered thirty degrees below. Madame tried to prepare Philippa for possible disappointment by warning her that it was doubtful whether Mr. Ross would feel that it was wise to attempt a thirty-mile journey in an open sleigh in such bitter cold. Madame herself shivered with alarm at the idea. Philippa tried hard to prevent them from guessing how disappointed she would be if they had to go by train, but the smile with which she assured them that it "really didn't matter" was a pale and unconvincing one.

It was on Saturday that they were to start. If Mr. Ross did not come for them they were to take the ten-o'clock train. There had been no message, so Philippa told herself that it seemed certain that they were to go by train.

She awakened at the usual time, although the rising bell was half an hour later than

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usual because it was holiday time. So she had a long time to lie in bed and think. There was no reason for getting up; she would just have to wait for breakfast in an almost empty house, for most of the girls had left the afternoon before. Somehow, in the solemn gray morning all sorts of fears seemed to come out of the corners of the room to haunt Philippa. Jeff's departure the afternoon before seemed to have cut the last cord that bound her to home. The visit to Bostwick, from being a wonderful adventure, became something almost terrifying. How did she know Bertha's family would like her? She had never been away for a visit among strangers in her life. It began to seem a dubious undertaking. She stared with solemn eyes ahead of her, trying to envisage the experience ahead of her.

Therefore, when the rising bell rang, she jumped out of bed with unusual alacrity, even though the temperature of the room was so icy that it was a really brave act gaspingly to close the slide of the window and open the door for the heat from the hall outside to come in. Then, after taking refuge a few minutes in bed again while the temperature of her

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room went up a little, she had courage enough to think of dressing.

When she retired behind the screen for her bath she found that the water in the pitcher had thin ice on it. That so enchanted Philippa that she forgot all about discomfort and fears. It made her one with all the hardy adventurers of romance, who before her had had to break the ice before they could bathe. She broke the little cake of ice so the statement could be literally true. And, as her teeth chattered when the icy water splashed over her, she exulted in her own hardihood—and the story she could make of it. Warmed as much by the glow of her imagination as by the brisk rubbing with a particularly rough bath towel, she was dressed and had her hand-bag packed some minutes before breakfast.

Bertha and she were half through a rather breathless meal when Angelique brought in a telegram from Mr. Ross saying that he expected to come for them by ten. Philippa was rejoiced. Bertha said:

“Father must have had his breakfast early.” She was evidently much impressed.

It really was some minutes before ten when the sleigh, the bells making a melody like all

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the Christmas stories Philippa had ever read, drove up to the door. A man who looked absolutely mountainous got out. His face was apple red with the bitter cold, but his blue eyes were warm with friendliness. When he was in the house and began to peel off one layer after another of wrappings, it was easy to understand why he had seemed so huge. He really was a rather lean, though powerfully built, man, who looked as if he spent most of his days out of doors.

"But do I have to wear such piles of clothes?" Philippa exclaimed as she watched him peel off a shaggy fur cap and coat, a woolen muffler from his neck, a heavy woolen overcoat, and a warm sweater—all this over an ordinary winter suit. "I don't believe I could get them all on at the same time. And I'd look a fright."

"These girls of ours think of their looks even when they're all covered up with furs in a sleigh," he laughed. "We'll let you off with a layer less. You'll be all snug and warm in the back with fur rugs all around you, hot-water jugs at your feet, and myself for a windshield in front." Then he turned to Madame with great deference: "May I ask you

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for plenty of boiling water to fill the jugs? And will you tell me where I may get a man to help pack in the luggage? I must take the horses around to a stable to give them a rest and feed."

"Angelique's husband is about the house and will do all that is necessary," Madame said, smiling. "And we will give you an early lunch after you, yourself, have rested. It is a hard trip even for a strong man."

When Philippa came down, arrayed for the drive, she felt so trussed and stuffed with clothes that she could hardly move. At Mademoiselle's advice she wore, besides the under-flannels which she had never thought any human power would make her wear, the heavy woolen stockings, laced shoes, and overstockings that she used for skating and snowshoeing, woolen tights, her heavy serge school uniform, a sweater, and her fur coat over all. Even then, Madame insisted on winding over her woolen tuque and around her neck a long woven woolen muffler. She had mittens on her hands and carried her muff. She felt that she waddled when she walked and that it would be a physical impossibility to raise her hand to her head.

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The small trunk that Madame had loaned her for the trip was lashed on at the back of the sleigh, and three suitcases belonging to her and to Bertha were stowed in around Mr. Ross in front. The back seat was a nest of fur rugs. When the girls were packed in it, their feet resting on what seemed like a furnace at the bottom, the fur rug at the back and the one in front were drawn so tight about them that they felt as if they were in a furry bag with only their heads peeping out. And even then Mr. Ross was not satisfied. He pulled Philippa's woolen muffler about her face so nothing but her eyes were uncovered.

"But the collar of my coat comes up to my nose and my cap down to my eyebrows! I'll smother!" protested a muffled voice from somewhere inside the bundle of fur and woolen stuff. But Mr. Ross only laughed.

"You'll be glad of it before we get home," he said. Then, folding his own rug closely about him and drawing on huge fur gauntlets, he touched his whip to his cap to Madame and Mademoiselle, and they were off.

At first Philippa thought she wasn't going to enjoy the trip a bit.

"I feel like a sack of potatoes with a string

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tied around the top and dumped into a cart," she commented to herself. "If I were *murdered* I couldn't move."

But that feeling of helplessness wore off and it wasn't many minutes before she began to enjoy the snug warmth. After all, she could move her head from side to side and see things. She could hear the joyous melody of the bells that were the perfect fulfillment of something she seemed always to have longed for. And she could talk to Bertha—or so she thought. But when she tried to say something she discovered it was an enormous effort to make Bertha hear, sunk in the midst of all her wrappings. And it seemed a long time before Bertha's voice could make its way to her. Moreover, although she would never have believed it, the biting air made her *teeth* feel cold. It was more comfortable to keep silent and just exist in the melodic jangle of the bells, the jewel-bright sunlight, the delicious skimming motion, the always changing exquisite white world, its brightness broken for comfortable intervals by the unreal grouping together of houses in a village street or by the solemn dimness of a stretch of shaded road.

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When, occasionally, she pushed aside the wrapping from her face a little, she found the air cut like a razor edge. The lining of her nose ached with the intake of her breath. So she was very willing to pull the scarf close about her face again and breathe the air that had been tempered a bit by the little penthouse formed by the overlapping folds of stuff. She could see that ice was forming on the edges of it, where the moisture of her breath met the outer air and froze.

In this sheltered dream world of comfort there was no way to gauge time and distance. Her mind seemed strangely separated from her motionless body; it went soaring—faster even than their speed—over the glistening world. It glanced here and there—now with her father and mother in some unknown Western town—now with Doreen—wincing a little at the thought of La' because she was jealous of a tie she didn't share—then again, shyly wondering how Doreen felt and vaguely thrilling in sympathy. Now it went on ahead of the sleigh and tried to make pictures of this place she was going to, and built scenes of pleasure which thrilled her young vanity

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because she would be, for the first time in her life, the central figure.

"From what Bertha said, they're going to treat me as if I were really a grown-up," she thought. I wonder how Mother will like that. *I think it's trick. I wonder if I'll always know how to act?"*

She had begun to shift around a bit uneasily in the contracted space, beginning to feel that her limbs might feel cramped in a little while—also to wonder whether it was not growing colder. How else could it be that, in spite of all the clothes she had on, she felt that the bitter cold was much nearer her shivery body than she would have believed possible? At this moment Mr. Ross drew in the horses and turned around to them. The sudden stop and the silence made everything seem unreal, as though the engine of the universe had run down. The big, hearty voice boomed at them through space.

"We've made about fifteen miles, and we'll stop at the hotel here. You girls will need to be thawed out a bit. And we'll have the foot-warmers heated up."

"Father, do you think we have to stop here?" Bertha's voice seemed unreal. "It's

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always full of men smoking their vile pipes. And the windows are never opened from the beginning of winter until the end."

"Not then, if some of them can help it," said Mr. Ross, philosophically. "But we'll stand it for a few minutes. You never made this trip when it was quite so cold, you know. We'd best be on the safe side. We'll get something hot to drink, too. That 'll help."

Before a small red-brick house, right on the wooden sidewalk of the town, they drew up. When Philippa tried to step out of the sleigh she tottered and would have fallen if Mr. Ross had not caught her. She was so stiff that it was some moments before she had any power over her muscles. And when she could move, she felt like nothing but an animated bundle of clothes.

Although what Bertha had said had prepared her somewhat, it was worse than anything she could have imagined when they pushed into the general room—combined office and "parlor" of the little inn. The air was thick with evil-smelling tobacco smoke, and with reminiscences of all the tobacco that had ever been smoked there and all the food that had ever been cooked. Add to that the fact

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that the room was crowded with dark, unkempt-looking men, it is not wonderful that both the girls drew back from the entry.

But Mr. Ross drew them in, through the room and into a small dining room, where there was a red-hot stove and somewhat better air. There he seated them with their feet against the base of the stove, while he went out to give his orders. Whether the hot drink that was brought was tea or coffee, Philippa hardly knew; it tasted like neither and like nothing else she had ever drank. But it did do her good; in a few minutes both girls were in a glow with warmth and ready to start.

The cold and the monotony of the scene through which they passed and the smooth motion brought at last a sort of waking drowsiness that was almost sleep. Even Bertha hardly roused from this to mark the landmarks that showed they were nearing her home. As for Philippa, when they turned in at last from the public road to where an avenue of trees marked the approach to a house, she didn't even notice it. So the sudden cessation of motion and the opening of a door and the sound of welcoming voices came to her as a great surprise.

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The first thing she knew she was being half carried up steps and a warm motherly voice was saying:

“The poor children! They are half frozen. Now, Chester, I knew I was right in saying the trip would be too severe. I’ll just take Philippa up to her room and put the child to bed with a hot-water bottle at her feet. And then we’ll just let her sleep. Don’t let me forget to rub some cold cream on her face. It’s going to be stiff and sore after all this exposure.”

CHAPTER XXIII

*F*ROM the moment when she awakened, after a long nap, and was triumphantly conducted downstairs by Bertha to a late dinner, things happened so fast that Philippa, looking back afterward at her visit to Bostwick, could hardly distinguish one day from another. Something jolly seemed to happen every minute. Christmas was only two days off, so the first thing was an expedition to bring in greens to decorate the house. That was the next morning. Mr. Ross, Bob (Bertha's brother who reminded Philippa of Sam Boulden), Bertha, and a big, silent, English-looking chap from the next place were the party. They went on snowshoes, of course, and invaded the majestic silence of the woods with their light-hearted clatter. They came back so loaded with holly, crowfoot, ground pine, and a rarely perfect branch of mistletoe which Bob persistently sought in spite of the

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fun that everybody poked at him in consequence, that they looked like a little clump of shrubbery which some celestial gardener was shifting across white spaces to Mr. Ross's lawn. Mr. Ross, himself, carrying a tree bigger than himself, and powdered with snow from its branches, made a fine Santa Claus in his northern stronghold.

All that afternoon they decorated the dining room, hall, the living room, and the big drawing-room with green garlands and red and green wreaths. Philippa and Bob were told off to trim the Christmas tree. The others, with stepladder, hammer and nails, and twine, made an apparently hopeless confusion that began to be cleared away only toward evening. Some man was always on a stepladder, bombarded with criticisms and directions from below which he received argumentatively when it was Mr. Ross, meekly when it was Victor Forneret, the neighbor—especially when the critic was Bertha. When it was all done, Mrs. Ross made them clean up the disorder they had made and they retired to their rooms to rest from their labors and dress for dinner.

That evening, which was glorious moon-

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light, so many young people drove over, or snowshoed over, to make plans for the coming two weeks, that Philippa, in hopeless confusion, gave up trying to keep track of events at all. She couldn't distinguish one from another, new as they all were to her. She merely had a vague impression of enormous hospitality, of exteriors a little less sleek than would have been the case in her city, but of manners as delicately considerate as the best she had known while they were more outspokenly hearty. And never had she seen such burly, ruddy men or such red-cheeked, bright-eyed girls. With the newness of it all, and the strain of the long ride not yet quite over, everything became a pleasant warm haze to her from which she gazed in wonder at Mrs. Ross, authoritatively arranging or canceling dates, with apparently a perfectly clear idea of what seemed to Philippa a tangled confusion. Finally, seeing the heavy eyes of 'her two girls,' Mrs. Ross, soon after the Yule-log was brought in and kindled with much ceremony, good-humoredly swept all the callers out of the house. Philippa went to sleep while she desperately tried to attach a single name to a single personality.

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The next day they were, for the most part, left to themselves, and the preoccupation of the household with Christmas presents and Christmas dinner. It was practically impossible to get trained service so far from a city, Mrs. Ross explained to Philippa, so in the house they had to manage with two ignorant but willing maids from the countryside. Therefore, everything but the simplest cooking had to be done by Mrs. Ross or Bertha, and every detail of each meal planned by the mistress of the house. Philippa was enchanted to help, and so delighted that she was allowed to make the mayonnaise and stuff the potatoes that she was thankful to her mother who had insisted that she learn something about cooking. She was glad, too, that she had thought of bringing so many snapshots of home things and people. Used to decorate calendars or other little trifles, they would serve, for the emergency Christmas gifts that she had had no time to make or opportunity to buy. When, on Christmas morning, Bertha and she hurried on their clothes in the gray light of early morning and stole downstairs to see what was in their stockings and to see the big tree ablaze with lights, it was such fun to find the

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pretty or funny gifts which every member of the household had given her, that not one lonesome or unhappy thought flew homeward. In fact, late that night, after all the crowded jollity of the day, the big family dinner with sixteen Rosses and their relatives at table, the skirmishing under the mistletoe when Bob, having fairly trapped her, was laughed at because he let her go without exacting penalty, the holiday sleighride with six sleighs strung along the white road, the impromptu dance in the evening—it was then for the first time that Philippa remembered that she had forgotten to be sad because she was not having Christmas at home.

The next two weeks were so crowded with hearty fun that it was hard to find time to get the proper amount of sleep. Almost every household in Bostwick gave a party of some kind, the Rosses leading off. And usually their hostesses insisted on Bertha and her guest spending the night as well. So they made a sort of royal progress from homestead to homestead. Moreover, as there were usually either daughters of the house they were visiting or other young girls invited to spend the night also, often after the dance ended,

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almost the best fun of the night began. For the girls, with bathrobes over their night-gowns or pajamas, warm bedroom slippers on their feet, and hair hanging down their backs, would gather in one of the rooms assigned to them, perch on the bed with their feet tucked under them, and live the dance over again, comparing notes as to what the various male beings had said to them—screaming with laughter when they found that one man had said the same thing about the “midnight” eyes of three different girls, and getting into such a state of giggles and general hilarity that sleep seemed the least important thing in the universe. Once, two older girls and Bertha and Philippa became so chummy that even separating enough to go into the adjoining room was not to be thought of. So they decided that three of them could be accommodated lengthwise in the bed, the fourth could lie across the foot of it. They began the night in this way with much enthusiasm. But Philippa, awaking when the first gray light was straggling through the windowpanes, found herself very cold and cramped and painfully sleepy. So she finished the night in her own room. In so small a place, the grown-up,

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female, unmarried population amounted to no more than twelve, even though there were one or two other holiday guests. As their ages ranged from Philippa's fifteen to the mature twenty-seven of another guest, it will be seen that Philippa was having a wide experience.

The English people in Bostwick were, naturally, of varying degrees of affluence and of varying occupations. They boasted a member of the Canadian Parliament. There was a physician, the bachelor rector of the little church; there was even an author known in the United States as well as in his own country. But most of the heads of households were the nearest approach to the idea of "country gentleman" which Philippa had gathered from stories of English life, that she had as yet known. They were farmers, but not farmers as we of the United States usually interpret the word. They farmed their land, it is true, with the help of what labor they could get from the surrounding rural population; and the produce of their land was certainly a considerable part of their livelihood. But they all had other sources of income, inherited or derived from some business in the city. Their interest, however, was

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distinctly in their country neighborhood, in the politics of their county and province. They were seriously interested in hunting, too; had their local pack and rode to hounds. And many of them, Philippa gathered, were members of a hunting club in Ontario, and, with Indian guides, repaired to the wilderness when the open season for moose was on. There was hardly a house in Bostwick that did not have its magnificent antlered moose heads mounted in entrance hall or library or living room. Yet, though their tables were spread with hearty plenty, there seemed to be no such extravagant expenditure otherwise as Philippa was accustomed to in her home city. The girls dressed simply and were quite contented to wear to the parties the sort of frock that would, in Washington, not have been considered a dancing dress at all. And Bertha's mother, when she went to church, contentedly donned a fur coat of a pattern that Philippa had seen in photographs of ten years back, and a hat that she laughingly confessed had been her "church hat" for five years running. When they were all in church one Sunday, Philippa, looking around the congregation, thought that she had never seen so many rosy,

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hearty, happy-looking people together in all her life before.

"Yes, indeed, I certainly am going to live in the country when I marry and have children," she thought. "That is, if I can find a place like this in the United States.

Often the dances were held in the big kitchen, because the drawing-room was not large enough or had old-fashioned carpet on the floor or could not be properly heated as often happened with an especially large room, or one that had a northwest exposure. There the Canadian fiddler would be put up on a table, sometimes, and would sit high above them all, his swarthy face ruddy with exertion, his whole body dancing with the rhythm, calling out, in French, the figures of the country dances which, strange as they were in the beginning to Philippa, she learned to romp through with joyous abandon. She was in such demand as a partner that she often had to promise dances a long time ahead. But she had common sense enough to realize that this was because she was the new girl, the novelty in a small neighborhood where there were many more young men and boys than girls. All the girls, in fact,

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were great belles. In all of the gayeties, however, no one figure seemed to stand out more with Philippa than another. Some of them danced better than others, of course, or were better looking. But there were so many strange to her, and there were so many jolly parties and everything was so general, that the whole two weeks seemed like one joyous revel through which she romped. And of the boys there was not one, not even Bob Ross, who pretty generally managed to be at her side, who compared with Jeff in her eyes. And of the young men, nobody who approached the young Seigneur.

For all her life afterward, however, one day was to stand out as the most delightful. It was near the end of the holiday. Bertha and Philippa came home before lunch and settled down with a sigh of relief to the prospect of an afternoon and evening at home. They had been going so incessantly that the break in the week's festivities was as great a delight as the beginning of the parties had been. At Mrs. Ross's advice, after lunch they put on bathrobes and slippers, and went to their own rooms for a much-needed nap. It was with a

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sense of exquisite luxury that Philippa tucked the soft down comfort about her and sank into a deep sleep.

When she woke the snow was falling, the flakes so thick, so determined, that the storm promised to be something more than usual. The wind rose and howled about the house, driving white swirling masses against the stout storm windows. With all the buffeting there was not a tremor in the house, nor did one of the substantial casements of the outer windows rattle. Philippa lay there in warm and luxurious restfulness, feeling, as she had never felt it before in her life, the blessedness of shelter from the stern forces of nature. Her imagination went out into a howling, white waste where she, alone, should struggle against icy winds and engulfing drifts until she sank down—to — The shiver with which she awoke from the imaginary tragedy made all the more delightful her safe comfort in the warm and sheltered room. She drew the down coverlid closer about her shoulders, sighing with delight, and watched the ever-falling, never-fallen curtain of the snow in expectation of the moment when the shrieking wind would drive masses of it

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against the windows as if in ferocious protest against the barrier that kept it from her.

All that evening everyone seemed to feel, as a new thing, the homely cheer of the snug red-brick house. After dinner Mr. Ross and Bob brought in fresh logs for the big fireplace in the living room, and then threw on pine cones, so after they had turned the light down, the place was filled with leaping flame and dancing shadow. They all seemed to feel a peace that they had not had in all the bustling holiday time, and everyone was strangely near to every other one. The Rosses seemed to Philippa like friends she had grown up with. And all of them, even usually tongue-tied Bob, talked easily and without restraint or any thought of the effect of their words, of people, of ideas, or of things that they had done or heard or thought. It was an evening of complete happiness which seemed, somehow, to need music to express its completeness. So Bob brought out a guitar which he usually could not be induced to play, and strummed harmonious cords while they sang softly. When the Canadian started "A la Claire Fontaine" or some other well-known French song

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the maids, hearing from their chairs around the kitchen stove, joined in. It was almost midnight before they could decide really to leave all this and go to bed.

It snowed all night, and when Philippa looked out of her window the next morning she could see nothing to indicate where the road had been, but the trees that marked off an uncertain parallel. When she got down to the breakfast table, there was a great stamping in the kitchen as Mr. Ross came in from a tour of inspection.

"Well, we're pretty well buried up," he said, when he came into the dining room, rubbing his icy hands to warm them. "The drifts are about ten feet deep in some places. And though it's slowed up a bit, there's more still to come. We may get the roads about here broken in to-morrow, but I doubt if you girls can start back to school before the afternoon of the day after and not then, if there's much more snow. There are hollows where the snow drifts so badly that we won't get to the bottom of them for some time. I don't see any tears being shed." He shook with hearty laughter.

"I can't imagine anyone ever really wanting

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to leave this place," Philippa said, solemnly. "Unless it was to go to his own home. But"—she hurried on to get away from *that* topic—"if the roads are impassable, isn't it hard sometimes to keep house, Mrs. Ross? If delivery wagons couldn't get to *us* for days I'm afraid we'd starve. Of course, I know its different here, but ——"

"Bless the child, I'll have to show her the storeroom—and the cellar—and the cold closet—and the dairy." Mrs. Ross could hardly wait for Philippa to finish breakfast before she dragged her off.

"Better show her the barn, too," said Mr. Ross. "With five cows and all the hens in a chicken house that can be heated in weather like this, we could stand a pretty long siege."

So Philippa was conducted down cellar, a big, well-lighted one with a cement floor. In it were barrels of potatoes, apples, and all the winter vegetables. Cured hams hung from the rafters; pumpkins and squash covered a long table. In the pantry was a barrel of flour and a barrel of sugar. In the cold closet were fruits and vegetables canned in glass, cheeses, besides canned fish and other

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commodities by the dozen from the wholesale grocer. In the dairy were pans of milk, jars of cream, and pats of their own butter."

"We won't go out to the cow stable," said Mrs. Ross, laughing, "nor to the chicken house, although I'm sure Mr. Ross expects you and the men have made a path. But, you see, we really are fairly independent of town here."

"Oh, I think that's the way to live. There never is a time when you're not ready for company, then. I'm going to live in the country and have things all stored up like that. It makes you feel so solid and—permanent, somehow."

Bertha came out to the dairy for Philippa, whom she found looking at the cream and delicious-looking butter and delivering herself in this fashion.

"Come on and help me," she said, laughing. "Half of Bostwick has come to see us on snowshoes."

Sure enough, the room seemed full of young men, red faced and alive to the tips of their fingers with the brisk run and the biting air. They were peeling off coats and comforters,

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evidently prepared to make a stay. And before they had got their things off others came. The girls were half distracted, wondering what they would do with them. But the boys themselves, were under no embarrassment. They trooped out into the woodshed for logs for the fire; they played cards or arranged games or read a book in a corner. They strolled out into the kitchen to see Mrs. Ross and ask her what she was going to have for lunch. One of the boys who had been in the war insisted on taking the maids' task of peeling potatoes from her, saying that he had become expert in the K. P. They were good-natured rivals for the attention of the town girls, but the ones who couldn't get their share of attention seemed to get along well by themselves. It was a protracted indoor picnic which lasted all day. And when night came and the roads had been cleared out a little, they pulled the girls from the nearest houses to the Ross's by harnessing themselves to a sleigh and pretending they were frolicsome ponies as well as strapping young men may in roads that were still deep with snow. The same sleigh also served to bring the nearest fiddler. And the evening came to a glorious

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close with an impromptu dance in the big kitchen.

“Oh-h-h!” Philippa sighed to herself as she crawled into bed, having had to divide every dance between two and sometimes three partners. “I never knew there was so much fun.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE first persons that Philippa saw on getting back to the Château were Helen Odell and her father who was just going. Helen looked sullen and unhappy and her father, troubled. Helen did, however, give Philippa a friendly smile.

A few days later Madame called Philippa into her little white austere room for one of the little colloquies that always marked something momentous in the girls' lives.

"I think, my little Philippa," she said, in her gentle hushed voice. "There is something you can do that will help us of the Château to a more happy state of things. It is something that concerns Helen."

"Indeed, Madame," said Philippa, ennobled, somehow, by Madame's confidence in her. "I will do anything I have sense enough to do."

"I think you have the sense; and *le bon gré*—the good will, I should say, I expected to

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find not lacking. Helen's parents feel that we can better guard Helen here than they can do it at home. This, you see, is so small a place that the arrival of a stranger is noted as would not be the case in a city. They feel convinced that, if she can be but sheltered for a time, this Mr. Hugh Ditmer will himself reveal so much of what he is that Helen will no longer be deluded. I think so also. They wished me to agree that she should not go out of the house except with one of the teachers. I would not consent to that. That is too unnatural a life for a young girl. It would make her bitter or morbid with unhappiness. So they let me have my way. And that way was that she would be allowed to go out on the streets at any time, to take part in the sports of the other girls, do anything that I would be willing to have the others do, providing that her companion was of my own choosing."

Philippa saw what was coming. It wasn't, to tell the truth, very welcome to her. She felt as if a heavy weight were settling down on her shoulders.

"But Madame—Is that fair to Helen, is that giving her liberty?"

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"I know, *ma petite*. There is that side and it is much to ask of you. But there must be someone to help Mimi and myself and this poor little girl who is struggling with something that she has not, as yet, enough strength to cope with. You have seen this man, this Mr. Hugh Ditmer—" Somehow the way Madame always pronounced this man's name with a subtle intonation of delicate scorn. "You feel, I am sure, that it would not be for the happiness of Helen to be in the power of that person?"

"Yes—but ——"

"You are going to say, I am sure, that you cannot take the responsibility to act. I, too, would have felt that at your age. But, *cherie*, it is not we who choose when we will assume responsibility and when we will not. There arise circumstances when, by the terrible logic of events, we are the one who must act—we and no others. I, *moi-meme*, would not have undertaken this affair. But circumstances so worked together that I was the only one who could. Until she met this Mr. Hugh Ditmer I had much influence with Helen, more—so they often told me—than her parents who

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had, perhaps, spoiled her with too much indulgence."

"But you, Madame, are so wise and wonderful. And I ——"

Madame placed her hand softly on Philippa's.

"There was one time, when I was of the age of Helen, when much of wretchedness might have been spared me had I had one young companion who would have done for me what I am asking that you do for Helen. Youth can do that for youth that age cannot do."

"Oh, Madame, since you are sure it would be right, of course I will do what you say." Nobody could have failed to be convinced by the almost tragic earnestness of Madame's voice and face.

As time went on, however, all of the serious side of the arrangement passed out of Philippa's mind. It had decidedly pleasant features. In the afternoon hours for exercise Helen and she could go off for themselves for snowshoe tramps or for sleigh rides or just loiter about the quaint little town, in and out of the few shops, trying their French on the *habitant* behind the counter, being told, perhaps,

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that she could not understand them because they talked, "yank Anglas," which dark saying Helen translated to mean "only English" (*rien que l' Anglais*). Helen seemed to enjoy these trips and the longer ones on Saturday as much as Philippa did; it really was a relief to both of them to be free of the long line of girls, even though Mademoiselle Mimi walked at the head of it. And they were really companionable and very sympathetic mentally. If there was any bitter to be mingled with the sweet of her agreement with Madame, Philippa had not yet tasted it. She began to feel that Helen was going to be as good a friend as Bertha had become. Sometimes she began to place them in the same category with Anne 'n' Virginia before she had time to stop and reflect that there is something different in the girls you have grown up with and have always been friends with.

"I'm sure the very best friends are made early in life," she told herself. Helen never spoke of her love affair and Philippa was sure she was getting over it.

Then everything was driven out of Philippa's head but the glorious prospect that Jeff opened up to her. He came to see her one

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day with the news that something he had been hoping for for a long time but had almost given up was really coming true. The wonderful winter Carnival that had, in years past, made Montreal famous was to be held again that year. The young Prince of Wales had expressed a wish on his visit to Canada in 1920 to have the opportunity of seeing the spectacle and taking part in the winter sports. The Montreal leading citizens, among whom was Margaret Dixon's father, had engineered the thing, and Jeff's father because of his railroad interests as well as his position on certain senate committees had known about it almost as soon as the project had been started. And he was going to take Jeff to the Carnival and had got permission for Philippa to go, too.

"It seems impossible that anything so wonderful can really be true," said Philippa solemnly when the full beauty of the idea had been made clear to her. "Oh, Jeff, how long will we have to wait?"

Some days after that Margaret Dixon came to Philippa with the same news.

"Oh yes, I knew," said Philippa, not without some mischievous pleasure. There was a

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ponderous conviction of her own position among the elect in Margaret that made it absolutely necessary to puncture the inflation whenever necessary.

"How did *you* know?" By this time Philippa had learned that Margaret didn't mean an insult when she showed such surprise in anyone but herself having inside information.

"Oh, it came through one of our statesmen who is having a good deal to do with the relations of the United States and Canada just now."

"Oh," said Margaret, candidly much impressed.

"I'm going up to Montreal for the Carnival," Margaret brought out her second big gun.

"So'm I." Philippa didn't stay to see how this shot would be received. She was afraid she couldn't keep her unconcerned, matter-of-fact pose another minute.

The next weeks, the most crowded of the year—for Madame always found that January was the month when the girls did the best work, left little time for daydreaming. But whenever Philippa did stop to think of the glorious prospect ahead of her, a sharp thrill

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of joyous excitement ran through her. At the beginning, it had seemed just too impossible that the time could ever come around. And she didn't really believe it had come until Margaret and Jeff and she were really seated in the train for Montreal. Half of the school came to the station to see them off. They were the only ones in the Château who were going to have the treat. Sam Boulden, carefully evading Philippa's eyes, and one or two of the other boys had come to do Jeff honor. As the train pulled out Philippa's satisfaction was dimmed a little by seeing the wistful faces of the ones left behind.

The very sight of Montreal was enough to send the blood coursing ecstatically through one's veins. It is a shocking thing to record of one almost grown up—so recently a belle of Bostwick—but when Philippa's feet first crunched down on the hard-packed crackling snow and she saw motors and sleighs skim past over the icy streets and heard sleighbells and motor horns combine in a wild jazz medley, she jumped up and down and squealed with delight. Mr. Randolph looked at her with approval:

"That's just what I expected you to do,

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Philippa," he said. "Can you keep that—what's the imbecile word you use, Jeff?"

"Pep," said Jeff, without hesitation.

"That's it—if you can keep that pep all the time I'll feel that my distinguished efforts toward having the Montreal Winter Carnival restored have not been in vain."

"*Did* you have something to do with it? Gosh! but I'd be glad to tell Margaret Dixon that!"

"I don't believe it would be discreet diplomacy if you did. But it may be that Montreal business men *might* look favorably on special excursion rates on some of the roads I am interested in that would bring a few thousand free spenders to Montreal in a rather dead year."

Philippa put on an expression of diplomatic reticence that would have done credit to a member of the American Diplomatic Corps at the Limitation of Arms Conference.

"I see it would be better not to mention *that* to Margaret," she said. "Her father is a railroad president."

"So I have been informed."

They wanted a sleigh, of course, instead of a taxi, to the hotel, so they were a little later

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than they would otherwise have been in getting to their hotel.

"If you change for dinner I would put on something warm," said Mr. Randolph. "The storming of the Ice Palace is scheduled for this evening and we will have to be getting to the place where I have a window reserved immediately after dinner."

That was the time that Philippa was glad her mother had insisted on her having the "Sunday dress" which she had said would be necessary at the school. The soft folds of the jade-green duvetyn were most becoming to the vivid piquancy of her face and the slender vigor of her body.

"Isn't it funny to think that I used to be worried about being too fat when I was a child," she thought, eying her reflection in the mirror with a good deal of favor. The period of which she spoke was as far back in the past to her mind, as though it had been twenty instead of two years. She busied herself, since she had a few minutes to spare, in laying out her silver toilet things on the dressing table, and hanging her clothes up in the closet. She had not brought a trunk, because of the difficulty of transfer with throngs

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arriving in the city every hour. But two suitcases held all that she really needed.

"I wonder if there will be any occasion to wear my dancing dress," she thought as she hung it up. "I'm glad I had time to have it cleaned and freshened up after the siege it had at Bostwick. Oh, I do *love* a hotel." She looked around at the rose-silk coverlid, folded into a puffy triangle, the shaded lamp over the bed, the reading lamp over the desk, the white, gleaming bathroom beyond with its stock of huge towels. "I wonder if Madame would think it was bad of me to love luxury?"

CHAPTER XXV

THEY got to their seats at a window that commanded a view of the Ice Palace only a few minutes before the fun began. When Philippa got her first glimpse of it the most extraordinary thing happened: she was absolutely dumb. When at last she could speak it was to say, half to herself.

"I have often wondered about the things you read in Revelation, about gold and pearls and jasper and all those things—and—and sardonyx—whatever that is. And I still wonder. But—to-night—makes you feel as if it might be—just that way."

Far off, they saw a luminous, opalescent castle, a battlemented tower at each corner. It radiated light—a gleaming shape of mysterious beauty. As they looked one tower turned a faint pink like the inside of a seashell, another an exquisite green. All at once there was a far-off sound of

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noise. From the turrets burst showers of sky-rockets.

"That's the signal," said Mr. Randolph. "The fight is on. The snowshoe clubs of the city are contending for the possession of the Palace. The defenders have sent up their signal. Now the attacking party will file past under this window. And I've been told they are reviving the old blanket suits that were in use many years ago. The Prince heard that the costumes were picturesque and said he would like to see them. They have been hunting them up or having new ones made for weeks here."

"There they are," called Jeff. "I see them coming—Don't you see?—Down there!"

In single file, every few men preceded by one holding aloft a blazing torch, the St. George snowshoe club came on. In tunics and knickerbockers of white blanket cloth, a stripe of crimson bordering the tunic, crimson tuque and woven sash, the flaring torches casting a wild splendor over everything, the men made a splendid spectacle. To a generation accustomed to thunderous noises in connection with all their sports, the soundlessness of it was impressive. Shod with moccasins,

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their snowshoes making no sound but a faint rhythmic padding, the primitive and picturesque costume accentuating the stalwart strength of the wearers, it did seem that men of simpler, more primitive breed had come back to people the earth they deserted long ago. Plainly a majority of them were of the blond type.

"Oh, they're splendid—splendid," said Philippa. "Why don't they wear suits like that now? It makes everything so much more fun, to dress for it like that—And it's so beautiful. Wouldn't they be wonderful with the sun striking them?"

All the time the men were filing past under their window, the spectacle of the Palace became more and more gorgeous. Attackers now were firing at it: rockets, Roman candles, as well as all the newer triumphs of pyrotechnics. The towers were always glowing with different colors, the air about it was flaming with star-bursts and the luminous paths of the rockets interwove in gorgeous arabesques. The fight grew fiercer until the air about the jewel-like thing was all aglare with light. Then men ceased filing past their window. There was a final crescendo of con-

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tending radiances. Evidently the issue was decided for, far off, a faint cheer ascended.

"And there's tobogganing on a real 'chute' to-morrow." It was like Philippa to console herself for the ending of one joy by concentrating all her thought on the next.

When Philippa looked over the sheer drop of her first real toboggan slide, whose angle with the ground seemed to be about forty-five degrees, her heart almost misgave her. If she hadn't been ashamed, after all her talking about how crazy she was to go tobogganing, she might have begged off.

But nobody asked her whether she wanted to go down or not. Instead, they packed her, as a matter of course, first on the toboggan. The mild sport they had had with the little slide they had built up from the top of the embankment in front of the school to the bed of the river had taught her how to arrange herself on the toboggan, with her legs straight out, feet under the curled up end and hands grasping the slight ridges at the sides. Jeff and Mr. Randolph piled on behind her, their heels digging into the sides of the toboggan. The Canadian escort, Mr. James Ogilvie, knelt at the back, his right leg free to serve as

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rudder and brake. One of the attendants gave them a slight push—They skimmed along an instant on the very slight incline at the top—Then—Philippa's heart jumped to her throat—They were over ——.

Fast, fast, faster than one could think or feel. Your heart in your mouth, a glare of light in your eyes, wind whizzing by your ears, your racing blood turning the icy air into heat. Faster, faster—Oh-h-h-h a terrifying leap into the air—Philippa thinking—“If I ever get to the bottom they can't *hire* me to come again!” Slower—slower—A gentle skimming motion—Pause—Down! “Oh, hurry, hurry! Let's get to the top again! I *never* knew anything so glorious.” Philippa was yards ahead of the rest, making for the long climb of the stairs.

CHAPTER XXVI

A*F*TER they left for luncheon, they didn't get back to the toboggan slide that day. There were too many other thrilling things to do. First, that afternoon Senator Randolph and Jeff and Philippa were among the "distinguished guests" at the Mayor's reception to the Prince of Wales. Philippa, quite confident that his famous smile—that delightful blend of diffidence, frankness, and winning friendliness—was directed especially at her, immediately bought all the photographs she had pocket money for and found him a most satisfactory substitute for Mr. Ross Cuthbert as a center of daydreams.

It is perhaps not surprising that, after another day or so of this, Philippa's head should have been a little bit turned. To be treated as a distinguished guest by Senator Randolph—and even by Jeff when he remembered his manners; to be waited on by hotel flunkies

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and called, "Miss Gale" by the strangers whom she met; to live in the luxury of a smart hotel; to have nothing to do but be carried from one pleasure to another by a solicitous host who was terribly afraid she wasn't enjoying herself and who petted her as he would have done a daughter of his own; to be, in short, a grown-up young lady privileged to command her subjects, was calculated, surely, to give a quite human young person a somewhat inflated conception of her own importance. Certain it was that she looked with much satisfaction at herself as she stood arrayed in the primrose yellow *crêpe de chine* dancing frock that was so becoming to her and posed before it to be perfectly sure how she would look to the favored onlooker through all the incidents of the coming ball. Her fascinated eyes strayed to her pretty feet in pale yellow silk stockings and satin slippers. Except for the "*soirée*" it was the first time in three months that she had worn silk stockings and she really couldn't keep her eyes away from them long.

The first sight of the "party" as Philippa found herself calling it, was enough to thrill any girl going to her first grown-up fashion-

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able ball. The big luxurious house, the beautiful colors, the music they heard coming from the ball-rooms as they were being welcomed by the host and hostess, all intoxicated Philippa, and she could hardly keep her feet still long enough to murmur a proper greeting. Jeff—a slender and rather elegant figure in his first full-dress clothes—offered constrainedly to take her up the short flight of stairs to the scene of the dancing. In a few moments they were dancing.

They had made one or two ecstatic rounds before Philippa all at once told herself that the most astounding thing in the world had happened: she was actually dancing with Jeff Randolph! Jeff Randolph who had stoutly refused to go to any of the high-school affairs that included dancing, or to parties at the houses of the girls because he said he was ‘no cake-eater’; Jeff whom she had many times offered to teach the steps only to be emphatically refused ——

“Jeff Randolph,” she burst out accusingly, “will you tell me when you learned to dance? And I’d like to know whom you got to teach you. You never would let me. Of course, if you thought I didn’t know how ——”

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"Aw, can it, Pip," said the elegant youth with the clear-featured dark face, "don't be an egg. It just seemed to be evident that it was a job that had to be done some time so when we were in Detroit Christmas time I went and had it done."

"You talk exactly as if you had been having a tooth out—Don't you think dancing's trick?"

"Can't say I do," said Jeff gloomily. "Maybe I will sometime, though." His tone was even gloomier as he made this concession. "Most of us seem to come to it. I can do the Ritz, too."

In spite of Jeff's professed indifference he danced well. Whether his face admitted he liked it or not his body did; every muscle and nerve responded to the rhythm. Philippa stole an almost timid look up into his face.

"If I hadn't known Jeff Randolph for years and years and remembered how he used to look when he came to the Clifton Park School I certainly would say he was just most awfully good-looking," she thought. "He looks grown up and I'm getting grown-up, too—a little bit. It makes things all different. Oh, dear. But—he does look trick in evening dress."

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After that dance ended they danced another together. Then Philippa began to feel uncomfortable. "I hadn't thought how it would be not to know anybody," she thought. "I wonder if somebody isn't going to introduce me to somebody. It's fun to dance with Jeff, but I don't want to dance with him the whole evening. And he would get tired of me. Oh, dear, I wish I could see some one I know—I wonder where Mr. Randolph is. Perhaps he could introduce me."

But Senator Randolph did not appear. The two young Americans were as isolated as though they had come to another planet. They danced the next dance together. But they were not enthusiastic and the gaze of each of them searched in the crowd for someone to deliver them from each other.

"Pip'll get bored silly with me," thought Jeff, while Philippa said to herself: "It's all very well to know that it's just because I don't know anyone here. A boy never thinks of that; he just thinks he got stuck with her."

It was while they were wandering around rather disconsolately after the third dance that they saw Margaret Dixon. Ordinarily the vision of Margaret Dixon would not have

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inspired enthusiasm in either of them, and this evening, in the most severely *jeune fille* white frock that could have been conceived, her heavy hair still uncompromisingly hanging down her back, she looked very much as she did at the Château. But, after all, Margaret was somebody whom they knew. So they made their way joyously toward her. Margaret, too, in her matter-of-fact way, was glad to see them.

"It is very nice to see you," she said. "We can swap off dances." Her eyes were candidly fixed on Jeff. "Just wait a minute and I'll bring some people up to introduce to you." In a minute or so she had reappeared. The older woman proved to be Margaret's mother, one of the girls was her sister, two of the youths her brothers. The fourth young man she introduced to Philippa with a perfectly apparent conviction that she was doing her school-mate a favor. "He's the son of the Premier, down from Ottawa," she said to Philippa as soon as she could get her aside. "Now I've paid back the good turn you did me in introducing me to your friend."

The rest of the evening was a complete success. With this party, increased by Sen-

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ator Randolph as soon as he came into the room, as a background, Philippa had a wonderful time. Margaret's two brothers and a cousin, together with Jeff, kept her on the floor all the time.

And a very surprising glimpse of Mr. Hugh Ditmer, oddly enough, added to Philippa's satisfaction. He was dancing a great deal with a pretty girl to whom he seemed very devoted. This made Philippa feel indignant because of Helen, but also glad.

"If he doesn't care any more for Helen than *that*," she thought. "He certainly must be going to leave her alone."

As the evening wore on there was a fly in her ointment, however. Young George MacKenzie, the Premier's son, after having asked her to keep a dance for him, did not return to claim it. In her new-born capacity of young woman of the world, Philippa resented this deeply. "If he said he wanted a dance he should have come for it. It's insulting, I think, for him not to. Just because he's the son of the Premier doesn't give him the right to be rude." After a time, her indignation grew so great that she couldn't keep it to herself. She confided it to the other girls. Mar-

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garet, too pleased with the fact that she was dancing almost all of the numbers to be seriously disturbed by anything, endeavored to find excuses for the young man. The other girls, however, probably rather amused at the high-headed little American girl rather egged her on until MacKenzie became a distinct grievance.

"He'll just see!" Philippa was so excited by this time that her eyes were as bright as diamonds and her cheeks a deep, deep pink. "When he does ask me for that dance—if he ever does—*I'm not going to dance with him.*"

"Oh, but you'll have to," said Margaret's older sister, trying to keep her face very sober.

"I just won't. You'll see."

"But how can you get out of it?"

She shrugged her shoulders with great nonchalance.

"I'll say I don't care to dance."

"I dare you." Miss Dixon was laughing outright now.

"Done." Philippa shut her mouth with inflexible resolve.

She was just a little bit sorry for the stand she had taken when George MacKenzie, look-

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ing distinctly worried, appeared. As he saw her his face cleared.

"Oh, you're the one. I got all tangled up with my program. May we have our dance now?"

If Philippa had been alone her indignation would have immediately evaporated; the young man looked honestly disconcerted. But Miss Dixon was looking on with satirical smile. Philippa felt that she must make good her threat.

"I do not care to dance, thank you."

Young MacKenzie stood looking at her in silence, his mouth a little open. He looked very young. Once he opened his mouth with the evident intention of saying something, but thought better of it, bowed jerkily and departed.

"So you did do it after all." Miss Dixon laughed lightly and went away with a partner who had just appeared to claim her. Philippa would have had to sit out the dance entirely alone had Mr. Randolph not appeared to keep her company. She chattered vivaciously while her eyes were on the dancers. She was looking to see whether Mr. MacKenzie had found a partner. But he did not

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appear and Philippa felt more and more uncomfortable.

A little later refreshments were served. Philippa was standing alone for a moment when she caught sight of the Premier's son sitting alone on a thickly padded step of the great staircase. Something in his rather disconsolate attitude caught at Philippa's quick sympathy. Although she knew it was absurd she couldn't help feeling as if she were responsible for his gloom. If she had taken time to think she wouldn't have spoken; but acting on impulse she did what was apparently the right thing. For as soon as she had crossed over to where he was and said:

"I'm sorry I was so silly about that dance. I just got peeved because you were so long coming for it. You see, I'm a stranger here and I suppose I was showing off." He looked up with a quick boyish smile and moved a little to make a place beside him with evident eagerness.

"I just thought I had made some mistake that I didn't know anything about. I'm not used to shows like this, you know. So far I'd been able to fight shy of them but the Governor seemed to think I ought to break into

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things a bit. I really had got all tied up about your name. But I'll say you did bowl me over." Then they both laughed with eager friendliness.

"Say—how old are you?" It was just beginning to dawn on Philippa that this was no real young man after all, but just a bashful boy.

"I'm seventeen and a half," he said, and blushed.

"Gosh! I thought you were grown up."

By this time young MacKenzie was daring.

"How old are *you*?" he demanded.

"Don't you tell anybody—I'm fifteen."

Then she blushed and then they both burst out laughing so that passers-by turned to look at them with much sympathy.

"A mere infant," he said finally, with quite successful scorn in his voice. "To turn *me* down. I say, let me get you something to eat and we'll stay out here and talk. These stairs are the best thing about this house—I know because I've sampled them often enough—when I was sliding down the banisters."

"Oh, but Jeff will be coming back in a minute."

"Who's Jeff?"

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"Just a friend of mine. We're from the States, you know. I'm here with his father and Jeff. His father's Senator Randolph."

"How old is this Jeff? If he's any stiff old guy who's going to spoil everything——?"

This time Philippa's delicious voice rang out unrestrainedly.

"He's—Jeff's—seventeen! There he is—the tall boy loaded up with food."

"I say, Randolph," sang out the Canadian. "Miss Gale and I think this is just the spot for a feed. If you'll look out for her I'll go and forage. I know old Pie-face who butties here and he'll let me in on the best of his line."

By the time he came back Philippa had hailed Margaret Dixon and annexed her. And the royal good time the four had and the amount they consumed could probably not have been equalled by any other guests at "the most brilliant ball of the season," as the papers called it the next day.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE cold weather held without break for about three weeks after Philippa and Jeff got back to Lanoraie. Every day the girls coasted down the little slide they had built in front of the Château, and when night came, sometimes with the help of Jeff or other boys from the school, poured water down the *chute*, so, by morning, they would have a glassy smooth descent again. Sometimes they went on long snowshoe tramps clear across island and river to Sorel and back, or into the silent recesses of the ice-bound forest. They grew more and more hardy and ruddy every day and able to withstand cold and hardship that Philippa would never have dreamed she could endure.

On one Saturday morning she was fastening the thongs of her snowshoes about her ankles when little Mademoiselle called to her.

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"Phileépa, I am much afraid it may rain. It looks to me as if the weather would break. There is a softness in the air."

"I won't go far." Philippa stood and watched Mademoiselle as she turned back into the house. It seemed as though the little figure had something forlorn and drooping about it.

Instead of taking the "winter road" marked off across the ice by parallel rows of evergreen trees, their trunks buried in the snow. Philippa kept to the unbroken snow at the side. The crust was so hard that her snowshoes left no marks on it. There was no sign of softening as far as she could see. Possibly there was the least possible tinge of moisture in the air that was usually so dry and bracing. It was the first time she had gone out alone and she had an inspiring sense of adventure as she sped along, through the white world, no team, even, in sight along the long straight road.

She sang everything she could think of, sending her voice fearlessly out into the friendly space about her. Usually she was too afraid of being teased to do that, and it gave her a sense of boundless power that was

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intoxicating. In her jubilation she unconsciously took a dancing step. The first thing that she was conscious of after that was of lying sprawled out on the snow.

Laughing she scrambled to her feet, only to find that the rim of one of her snowshoes was broken. She took a few steps, but found that it was going to be impossible to use it. The thing doubled up disconcertingly, tripping her up at every step.

"I'll just have to walk home on the crust," she thought. "I'm sure it ought to bear me up."

At first as, with her snowshoes slung over her shoulder, she trod cautiously on the icy crust, it did bear her up. Sometimes the crust cracked a little, but she didn't really break through. But the sun, dimmed as it was with the moisture in the air, still had power and, as it rose higher, there were signs of softening of the snow-crust. Once or twice her foot broke through up to her ankle and the snow underneath seemed to be a little soggy. As she drew near enough to shore to see plainly the red roof of the Château, she thought, "I believe the weather is going to break; I'm glad I won't have much more of

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this. In a little while the crust won't bear me up at all; and there must be three feet of wet snow underneath."

At that moment she paused involuntarily to see who was the occupant of the sleigh that was coming straight toward her along the winter road. It was from the village livery stable; she knew the sorrel horse that the Château girls often engaged. It might be some one who would take her in, and walking was beginning to be a toilsome proposition. Sure enough, it was Helen Odell.

"I thought I'd overtake you," she called out to Philippa. "Madame said we could have a sleigh-ride, and Mademoiselle told me the road you had taken. Jump in."

Throwing her useless snowshoes into the sleigh, Philippa gladly jumped in.

"Helen certainly does look *beautiful* this morning," she thought, with something like awe. "I never saw her with such pink cheeks before and her eyes are just gorgeous."

Back toward the island Philippa was carried in the sleigh, this time jingling along in comfort.

"I'll tell you I'm glad you came along," she said, settling down cosily under the rug.

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"I was beginning to wonder how long I'd hold out."

"Not any gladder than I am that I found you." Helen gave her a queer triumphant look. Then she laughed. "You know I can't go out without my jailor."

"Now, Helen, I think that's a little unkind." Philippa couldn't help showing she was hurt.

"Perhaps it is." Helen's tone was singularly unrepentant. "But you can't expect me to be pleased at being watched like this—or to like you any the better for being the one told off to shadow me. And if they think that it is going to keep me from Hugh they are much mistaken. I'll see him in spite of them all. They must think I'm very stupid not to be able to outwit them." She laughed with hysterical violence. Philippa began to be afraid of something—she knew not what.

She sat in silence, trying helplessly to think of something she could say. She felt that the situation was altogether too much for her inexperience to deal with. She didn't know what to do or say.

If she had said anything Helen was evidently in no mood to listen to her. With her eyes feverishly searching the white expanse

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ahead of them, she seemed to have forgotten Philippa's existence.

"What is that dark spot ahead of us?" She was evidently speaking to herself more than to Philippa, for she did not wait for an answer. "Is it ——? Yes, it *is* somebody—it's a man." She struck the horse a much harder blow with the whip than she had intended, for he bolted indignantly. She had all she could do to pull him down again into a trot.

A definite fear began to assail Philippa. "Helen, you are not ——?" She never finished the sentence that nobody was listening to. It was answered for her without any word from Helen. For the dark shape began to resolve itself into a man—a man on snowshoes with an oddly familiar appearance. Her fear became a certainty. Hugh Ditmer was waiting for them, bending down taking off his snowshoes.

"You see?" Helen turned toward her a head defiantly—triumphantly—high. "Did you suppose that you or anybody else—even Madame, who is so used to managing everybody that she thinks *I'm* going to bow down and worship, too—can keep me from the man I love and am going to marry—*marry*—do

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you hear? And this very day, too! He has got everything arranged—waiting for me. Oh, *he* knows how to do things. If the old priests and rectors and things are too stuffy to marry people without there old banns and parents' consent and things there are other men who can do it who are not so fussy. And it's all arranged and you are coming with me so they won't suspect anything. They'll think we're taking a "nice long sleigh-ride" until it's all over and we're off together and they can't prevent it—*they can't prevent it*, do you hear?"

Helen's voice was almost strident, with a painful edge of excitement in it—shaky at unexpected moments. It seemed almost as if there were a sob in it somewhere. And Philippa, utterly overwhelmed, sat stupidly, not even thinking what she could do.

With great effort Helen drew in the horse long enough for Hugh Ditmer to scramble in. The man crowded down in the one wide seat, forcing himself between the two girls. With a long sigh, that was almost a sob, Helen put the reins into his hands.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"**Y**OU are late." Hugh Ditmer turned to Helen with a smile whose confident power Philippa, even, felt the fascination of—but which also made her distrust him more. To-day he was not noticing Philippa at all; one would have thought he had never seen her before.

"He wasn't that way the day I met him by the Old Cheese Factory," she thought shrewdly. "Of course, you can't blame him for thinking about nobody but Helen to-day. And yet—you would have been expecting him to be thinking about her too much to notice me that day, too. And he looked at that girl he was dancing with in Montreal just as he does at Helen now. If he can pretend one time he may be pretending all the time. Oh, I've *got* to do something. He's going to make Helen unhappy somehow—I know he will. But I can't do anything. They've tricked me."

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She sat in silence while bits that came to her from the low-toned conversation that was going on at her right made her realize more and more how well the two had laid their plans. Yes, she was helpless.

All at once a wave of angry determination came over her.

"If I was old enough to go to a real ball, and old enough to have Madame trust me, I ought to be old enough to think of something to do. Anyway, I'm not going to *help* them to do wrong—I know it's wrong. And it's helping them to stay here. I can *try* something anyway—they'll never listen to me—but how can I get back? The snow is getting softer and softer. The crust won't hold. Here we are on the island. But there's nobody there in the winter. The O'Neills shut up the farmhouse and come into town—unless this should happen to be the time Tom O'Neill comes to take care of the stock. Not a sign of anybody. If they have a telephone in the house it's cut off. But I'm going to do *something*."

All at once she startled the absorbed pair by standing up in the sleigh.

"Let me out!"

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Hugh Ditmer turned to her in amused contempt.

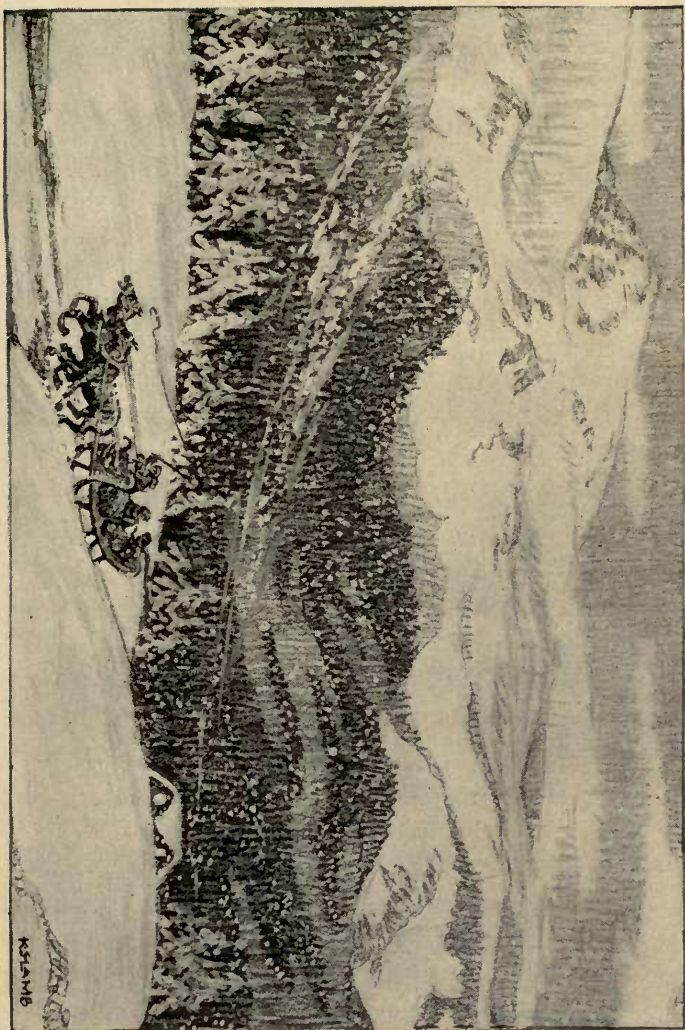
"What do you think you're going to do, anyway?" he drawled. "Just want to make a scene to show you disapprove of us so you can tell the saintly lady who bosses you?"

"I'm going back," Philippa said briefly.

"Don't be an idiot." Helen spoke sharply. "You can't gain anything by making a martyr of yourself. We're almost half the way there now; there isn't a sleigh in sight and there won't be; everyone who is going to market got there hours ago. Don't you suppose we thought it all out? Your snowshoe is broken and it'll take you hours to wade through this slush; it's getting worse every minute. We'll be married and on our way ages before you can get back to Lanoraie. Anyway, I should think you'd be ashamed to spy on a friend." She looked at Philippa with hostile, flashing eyes.

"I'm doing what I've got to do. If you don't stop I'll jump out. If you keep me with you I'll make things hard for you when you get to Sorel." Philippa herself hardly recognized the cool person who was speaking.

ALL AT ONCE SHE STARTLED THE ABSORBED PAIR BY STANDING UP IN THE SLEIGH—"LET ME OUT!"



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Hugh Ditmer's cheaply handsome face turned dark red with anger.

"Oh, let the damned little fool go, Helen," he said. "And the worse time she has of it the better." Helen looking at him in a startled way suddenly took fire.

"Yes! Get out. Go anywhere you want to. I don't care *what* happens to you!" She burst into pettish, excited tears.

In the sudden lull when Ditmer stopped the sleigh Philippa slid out and reached for the man's snowshoes. But he was too quick for her. With a tantalizing laugh he drew them beyond her reach. Then he whipped up the horse and Philippa stood in the deep snow of the road, alone, her one good snowshoe in her hand.

Without allowing herself to think too much about the prospect she fastened the shoe on her right foot, and turned her head homeward. First, she scrambled out of the road on to the crust.

"It held me a little while ago," she thought. "Maybe it will now." For a little way it did hold and her heart was beating high with confidence. "At this rate maybe I can get back before they reach Sorel. Lots of things

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might happen to them. If the road gets much worse it may be impassable for them. The horse may founder. Even if they get there before me Madame may know how to stop their being married even then. But I must hurry—hurry ——”

Her left foot broke through the crust and went down through a foot or more of soggy snow to water. With her weight on the snowshoe she pulled it out, running water. It was uncomfortable and, as soon as the cold air got to it, painful. But she kept on. There was nothing else to do.

The edge of the crust each time she broke through was icy sharp. Her ankles were soon cut and bleeding. But she was off the island and back again on the familiar stretch that led to Lanoraie. She pulled herself up out of the slouch of despondency into an attitude of determined cheerfulness. Any moment now she might meet some returning market man and get him to take her in and drive her to the Château.

As the morning wore toward noon the sun dispersed the clouds and the crust of the snow became softer and softer. Philippa now went through at almost every step. She was

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soaked to her knees; the right leg was so splashed with the wet snow she dragged up with almost every step that it was as wet as the left one. The left leg was so sore from the crust that she changed the snowshoe. Beside the fearful discomfort the tremendous exertion required with every struggling foot-step began to exhaust her. After each step she was forced to pause and get her breath. It was then that she wondered whether she could take another step. Still no cheerful sound of sleigh-bells broke the silence. No sleigh came in sight.

"I—don't—believe—I can go—one step farther." For the first time Philippa fell down upon the crust.

Madame d'Albert was just leaving her room to take her place at the luncheon table when she heard a queer sound in the hall below that followed the opening of the door. It was something between a sigh and a sob. It seemed to her that it shaped the beginning of a call to her. She ran down. Philippa lay in a heap on the floor, her face gray rather than white and the water widening in a dark puddle on the floor about her. She dragged her eyes open long enough to see Madame.

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"Helen—he met her—couldn't help ——" Then her eyes closed and she was silent.

"Oh, I have to wake her—it's exhaustion not a faint. The poor baby—I have to know." And Madame, shuddering while she shook the child's shoulders, repeated her question endlessly so the first instant of awakening would hold the answer. "Where have they gone? Are they married yet?"

Philippa dragged her eyes open.

"I can't," she said pettishly. Then something of Madame's passionate insistence found its way to her. "No—I don't know. At Sorel." She was asleep again.

"Where?—who is to marry them?" Again she had to go over it. It seemed an hour, although Mademoiselle Mimi, whom she had called in the first instant, had not yet time to get to her. At last, with shut eyes, the girl murmured drowsily. "No priest—no rector—don't know ——"

"Mimi," Madame lifted Philippa with one arm while she beckoned Mademoiselle on the stairs frantically with the other. "Take the child, and put her into a cold bath, then put hot water bottles all around her—in bed—extra comforts in my room. Hot milk;

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no, first aromatic spirits of ammonia. Rub her well—camphorated oil will do. I'll send the messages. It is evidently a justice of the peace they are going to. Helen, you know. I'll phone *Tante Louisa*. She will do all that can be done." She bent over Philippa and kissed her with passionate tenderness. "And now, *ma pauvre petite enfant*—who has been bravest of the brave—*un soldat, ma fillette bien-aimée*, then you shall have *all*."

Hours afterward—it seemed to her weeks—Philippa opened her drowsy eyes to feel restfully that she was in a world of most superhuman, delicious comfort. She was warm—oh so unspeakably warm and so unspeakably content. All around her was warmth and softness. But there were voices.

After a long time she cocked one eye open. It probably was a dream that showed her Madame there, bending over a huddled figure.

"It *is* a dream because Helen went somewhere—and she wouldn't come back—I—I wish people in dreams wouldn't talk that way. It makes me feel like crying ——"

The voice was saying—it was Madame's: "You will rejoice. You will thank the child

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that saved you. Not now. You cannot. But that you will do. Had there been some-one like her, to know and to act, I would not have been—as I was—ground between the mill-stones. Helen, my child—for you are like the child of my own suffering—there was once in my life a man, like that man, whom I loved—whom I thought I loved. See how I lay bare the wound in my own heart that you may be comforted. Of what use is it to suffer if it be not so one can warn others? And you may *know* that you are blessed to have escaped it. He was a man who drew my child's heart out of me and flung it back to me an anguished woman's. Others opposed. But I thought they did not know, because they were old and could not feel what I felt. So he, too, called and I, too, went. There was no little friend to struggle home through the snow to save me. He was a man—like that Mr. Hugh Ditmer. There are those men who seem to love to crush the loving fools whom they snatch to them. Helen, if you could know—how that man was—cruel ——”

The terror in the very sound of that last word rudely dispelled the mist that seemed to hide the two from Philippa. She opened her

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eyes, but shut them again. It surely was not right to look at Madame's face when that pitiful look was on it.

"She looks like a frightened child," thought Philippa. "How can she—when she is—Madame?"

"—It is—because I saw that same thing in him—not because it was the will of your family—that I wanted to protect you. If I had thought he would make you happy, I would never have taken one step. But he would have tortured you—taken your soul in his angry hands and twisted it this way and that, to suit his whim—to prove that he was master. I saw he was a man that would do, as Simon d'Albert did to me—a child not yet seventeen. At last ——" Her voice had sunk to an almost ghastly whisper. The whisper told so much that Philippa felt the sweat cold on her as if she were seeing some moment of inconceivable suffering. "At last I took my precious baby, my Mimi, and I stole from Simon d'Albert's house, not waiting to put even a cloak over me, only to catch up a blanket for the child. I went out in the night, in my thin night clothes, walking over fields through snow, to my parent's house. I felt nothing.

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I saw nothing because I was going to shelter—and away from him.”

With utter abandon Helen had thrown herself into Madame d’Albert’s arms.

“I felt it. I felt afraid sometimes. I knew—I knew there was something wrong in him. But I wouldn’t give in. I couldn’t. Because, though it was terrible sometimes to feel—a sort of chill—to be afraid, other times—and I couldn’t give *that* up—sometimes it was—so sweet.”

Philippa, with her eyes tight closed, lay motionless, hoping—hoping that the tears would not make their way down her cheeks.”

“I don’t know what it’s all about, but it sounds sad,” she thought. “And—I don’t believe I’d better let Helen know I heard.” She turned her head so they couldn’t see her face.

“See, the child is waking,” whispered Madame. “Don’t you want to say something to her?”

But Helen’s melting mood was gone.

“I can’t,” she said, and hurried from the room.

“Now Helen is mad at me again,” thought Philippa, rather piteously. “But Madame

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seems to think I did right. I wonder—why I thought he wasn't good enough for Helen? It just seemed to me that he didn't look at her the way La' looks at Doreen."

Madame came toward the bed and pulled the covers more closely about Philippa's shoulders.

"You are awake at last, my little Phileépa? You have slept the round of the clock. My sister Louisa in Sorel was able to find Helen at the house of the justice of the peace who would soon have married her to that man. You have much exhausted yourself, *ma petite*, but you will always have joy to have saved your friend from wretchedness."

Then, with exquisite tenderness, she kissed Philippa's cheek and went out, closing the door after her with soft precision.

All at once, as Philippa lay, slowly grasping again the details of the scenes through which she had so recently passed, a flash of intuition came to her.

"It is because Madame is afraid for Mademoiselle—in that same way—that she does not like Mr. Ross Cuthbert. But I know he isn't like Mr. Hugh Ditmer. Why, Mr. Cuthbert is *fine*. And Mademoiselle just

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adores her mother, so she won't let herself think of him. That's why she looks unhappy—and—oh, yes—he hoped to meet her out at the Manor that first day I went snowshoeing. Oh, *poor* little Mademoiselle Mimi! She isn't free, either."

CHAPTER XXIX

A*FTER* this exciting experience the Château de Liberté reverted to its normal, workaday school existence with surprising rapidity. Nobody but Madame and Mademoiselle and Philippa knew of Helen's escapade and they all tried to bury the memory of it as completely as possible. Bitter cold weather froze everything solid again and weeks of hard study lay before the examinations that preceded the Easter vacation. At Philippa's suggestion snowshoe races were organized in which the Boys' School competed with the girls from the Château. The last remaining glamour that Philippa had for Sam Boulden was dispelled when she defeated him for the championship, cheered on by all of the Lanoraie population that had stuck out the long isolated winter in the little town. When the girls began to get a little bored and blue with the long stretch of work

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Madame suggested to Philippa that she promote a school paper. This she did, but when she tried to make Helen Odell editor, Helen very firmly refused to have anything to do with it. This troubled Philippa. While Helen was not actively unfriendly to her, there was no renewal of their intimacy and the older girl kept aloof from her as well as from all the other girls. At the same time she seemed to cling to Madame.

"It seems sort of unreasonable to me," grumbled Philippa to herself. "I did exactly what Madame wanted me to do and yet she doesn't blame Madame, but does seem to blame me." There was no time, however, to brood, with school work and with the editorship of the paper which the girls insisted on endowing the American girl with. Philippa distinguished herself by writing a rhymed sketch of the Lanoraie notables. It was rather clever doggerel and the little thrusts at the townspeople were good-natured. So Madame had another soirée where the Cuthberts and Austins laughed consumedly to hear themselves immortalized in verse and where Mr. Ross Cuthbert and Mademoiselle did not exchange a single word.

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As soon as the sap began to run in the sugar maples Madame organized a wonderful winter picnic in the sugar bush. They went on long "*traines*," on which straw and rugs were piled and they saw the syrup boiled in huge kettles over roaring wood fires. They sampled it in every stage, from the thin fluid into which slices of bread were cast and eggs boiled to the waxy "*latire*" which was ladled out on shelves of snow and devoured as soon as it hardened to the crackling point. At the very end the syrup was poured into little molds of fish or hearts or tiny tablets, which they were able to take home with them as soon as the sugar had hardened. In between feasts at all these various stages they consumed substantial food, with salt meat and sour or salt pickles to whet their appetites for more maple sugar. Certainly nobody but school girls could come home from such a revel with red cheeks and sparkling eyes and protests that they had never had such a good time before. Helen Odell would not go on this picnic.

A few days after that came a decided thaw. The roads became impassable; the river was covered with slush two feet deep; there were rumors that the ice was cracking that warned

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all snowshoers and teams away. One night they heard loud reports, which the girls told Philippa meant that the ice was cracking. The next day there were streaks of water visible; in the middle of the river they could see a swiftly running current.

"It looks as though the ice would go down quickly this year," Madame said at the table. "If the mild weather continues it undoubtedly will."

"What happens if it doesn't?" asked Philippa, expert enough by this time in French to find the right words without hesitation. "And what harm would be done if it should freeze again?"

"If anything happens below here to choke the channel, the great cakes of ice pile up. Then, if it freezes, the ice is built into a solid obstruction, the water is dammed up, and we have high water."

"But we are way up above the embankment ——"

"That isn't anything at all in face of a real flood. Of course, the river never has risen high enough to be dangerous. But it isn't very pleasant to have a flood."

"Oh, but it's *fun*," said Bertha. "They tie

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the wooden sidewalks together and anchor them so they won't float away entirely, and you jump from one to the other as if they were rafts."

Nothing but the realization that Madame dreaded high water could keep Philippa from hoping that it might happen. When it began to get very cold again that night she waited with excitement to see what would happen. The wind rose, too, and she wondered if that would not be apt to crash cakes of ice together. And others would pile up against the obstruction and then —— How could any girl keep from hoping for all the excitement that could possibly come?

The next day was Sunday. Everything seemed quite as usual as they went to church except that Philippa could see the water really was higher in the river. When they came out it was almost up to the top of the embankment.

But Sunday dinner was too absorbing a matter to hungry school girls not to drive other thoughts out. All through the meat course Philippa's thought was concentrated on the important question; would the desert be ice cream and cake or not? She had heard

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rumors that it would be. To an American girl to whom ice cream soda and sundaes were one of the commonplaces of existence, the extraordinary scarceness of ice cream in Lannoraie was a never-failing source of wonder.

The question had just been most satisfactorily answered by Angelique's appearance bearing a huge platter of ice cream. Angelique's countenance was all one broad red grin. She always insisted on taking any special treat in herself because of the incidental popularity that it shed on her. Philippa had just enjoyed the first taste of ice cream—with—joy of joys—hot maple syrup sauce—when one of the girls screamed.

Everyone started, their eyes following the direction of Flora's. A thin snake of water was making its way from the baseboard at one corner of the room. The girls all rose as excitedly as though they expected instant annihilation, all but Margaret Dixon, who went on unconcernedly eating her cream.

In the excitement a tacit moratorium as to speaking French existed.

"What's the use of getting excited?" she demanded disgustedly. "It'll take an hour for it to rise enough to wet your feet. And it

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never does more than that, anyway." Philippa hesitated a moment. The testimony of a veteran of three high waters, as Margaret had proved herself to be, was worth following. So she resumed her place and finished the cream. For days afterward she bitterly regretted that the excitement had prevented her from getting the full enjoyment of the ice cream. She had even refused a second helping!

The maids were quietly clearing away everything from the side-board and serving tables that would be injured by the water. And when Philippa and Margaret had finished they aided Madame and the maids to carry the dishes out to the pantry, which, being a step higher, would, in all probability, not be flooded. When the table-cloths were off the chairs were piled up on the stout black walnut tables. By this time the water completely covered the sunken edges of the floor. As they retreated before the encroaching water Philippa, from the door, looked back. The big room, stripped and stark, looked very strange and somber to her.

"What will we do for supper?" she wondered. The thought of picnicking perhaps in

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the big drawing room or the school room was exhilarating.

Immediately after dinner all the girls rushed out of the house, headed by Miss Shelby, who, in the excitement, seemed almost human. It was true, as Bertha had said, the sidewalks on Empire Street were being, in many places, lifted from their supports and floated by the flood; the street was completely covered with water. Laughing and squealing when some tipping board threatened to upset them, the girls pushed on, trying, with a delightful sense of adventure, each cross street as well as Empire. As far as they could see on the river side stretched the water; the ice was completely flooded, so they could not see what was happening. If the ice was breaking up the cakes were not yet small enough to float. All they could see of the island was the little mound on which were the farmhouse and barn and out-buildings. In spite of assurances that the water had often been high before and had never done any damage, there was enough uncertainty to add a thrill of fear to the situation. Parts of the side-streets, however, were still unflooded and the back street not at all. When they met

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Jeff and some of the other boys from the school they learned that nothing exciting had happened there at all. Needless to say, the boys all thought themselves much injured that this was the case.

When they got back they found the dining room covered by several inches of water. Supper—sandwiches, cake and cocoa—was served amid great hilarity in the school room. The girls were all joyous with excitement, but Philippa noticed that Madame looked a little anxious; and she heard her telling Miss Shelby that the flood was now within half an inch of its greatest recorded height. After supper they all stayed together in the school room, and Mademoiselle played all of their favorite hymns for them to sing. Then someone asked Madame to read to them. So she brought out some of Drummond's "habitant" poems and held them spell-bound with her inimitable mimicry and delicate insight into French-Canadian character.

Then they parted for the quiet time alone in their rooms that always seemed to bring a final peace to the close of each day. Philippa could see that the cold was moderating and that there was a raw hint of rain or snow

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in the air. The wind, too, had risen still more. She could not sleep for some time for wondering what was going to happen.

When morning came the situation seemed unchanged. The water was certainly no higher. They had a sort of buffet breakfast in the school room and the routine of the day went on, unchanged except for the change of dining room. School was over for the day at three o'clock. Madame had requested the girls not to go out of the house; there seemed to be enough danger of unexpected duckings in the flooded streets to make staying indoors reasonable. The Château, not being a modern school, was not equipped with a gymnasium for indoor exercise. Philippa, loitering about her room, deprived of the hardy outdoor sports that she had become accustomed to at home, felt at loose ends. She turned over the leaves of several books that she had thought she was longing to read, but they did not look interesting.

Suddenly she heard a loud—a deafening—report. Coming out of complete silence as it did, the effect was startling. Philippa's mind ran the wildest gamut of surmises, from some belated war-time bomb going off to an explo-

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sion of dynamite in some car on the siding. Another—more deafening—report followed. She rushed out into the hall and found Margaret Dixon and several other girls there before her.

“It’s the ice piling up,” said Margaret Dixon. “I can see it from my window. It’s started to come down and a great lot of huge cakes smashed together. They’ve crashed into a pile about thirty feet above the embankment.” Margaret with her cheeks burning red and her eyes brilliant with excitement was transformed. “I’m going down on the gallery to see it.”

Most of the girls followed her; the house was full of stir and murmur. Helen Odell came out of her room.

“Come with me,” she said. “I’m going to ask Madame if we can’t go up on the roof. It will be a wonderful sight. You mustn’t miss it.” Helen, too, was changed, shaken out of the moping despondency of the last weeks. She caught Philippa’s hand and they ran downstairs. Madame and Mademoiselle were out in the hall, with the same thought in their minds as Helen’s evidently. The four of them found the steep ladder-like stairs

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that led from the attic out on the roof. Helen was the first one up and then hung over the edge of the trapdoor to help pull the others up.

It was a wonderful thing to be out on the roof, high above all the gigantic turmoil of the river and yet able to see it all. They could see the jagged wall of ice that now reached almost across the channel. Another great wash of the water crashed other huge cakes against the wall with a roar that almost frightened them, high above it all as they were. They felt the roof tremble under their feet.

"It looks as though the dam would reach clear across to the island," Helen said, in a hushed voice. "Has that ever happened?"

"Never, as far as I can remember," said Madame's hushed voice. "And people who lived here before me have never told of it."

"What can prevent it? And what would happen if it did?"

"Nothing but a decided change in wind or current, I should think, would prevent it. If this goes on the water will be higher than it has ever been."

"But they could go out and cut through it somehow, couldn't they?" asked Philippa.

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“I suppose so. Or much warmer weather would soften the ice so the current would wear a passage through. It is thawing now—hear the dripping from the eaves. But—meantime—we may be inconvenienced.” She smiled serenely.

CHAPTER XXX

THERE was a strange lull. The wind fell and the roaring of the water was hushed. In the quiet they could hear the drip-drip-drop as the winter-old ice on the eaves melted before the strong young sun. When a piece of ice detached itself and fell to the ground it made, in the silence, a report like a distant pistol shot. With pulses tuned to further excitement, Philippa felt almost irritated at the delay.

"I wonder if nothing more is going to happen," she sighed.

"Oh, *look!*" The voice, with a sort of awe underlying the wonder, was Helen's. "There's a bird's nest right under the eaves here. You can see it if you lean over—there." •

"*Doucement*—carefully, *mes enfants!*" called Madame. "The roof slopes much just beyond this place."

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Helen drew back, her eyes shining brightly.

"She is there on the nest, the little brown mother," she said. "She looked up at me as if she knew I wouldn't disturb her eggs for the world."

"It's a robin," Philippa announced. "Gosh! I didn't suppose it was *thinking* of being spring."

"Look! Oh, look!" Mademoiselle was pointing up the river. A huge wave was bearing down on the ice jam, a wave that carried on its crest plunging, bobbing cakes of ice. There was a deafening report as it hurled itself against the obstruction in its path, a roar as it recoiled. Splinters of ice crashed down like spray. They felt the tremor of the earth through the staunch old house under their feet. Then, in place of the subsidence they had expected, came a new commotion. The wind, coming from the east instead of from the west, rose, howling. Current and waves and ice fought, at the end of the dam, a frantic battle whose sign was a whirlpool on which cakes of ice charged only to bob about helplessly in a circle. All along the wall of ice ran an uneasy trembling. A new wave, a greater one, charged it. The

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dam groaned; again the house under their feet telegraphed to them the impact. With a deafening roar the ice-jam broke. Instantly the river below it was filled with floating cakes of ice ——

“So has that danger passed,” said Madame’s tranquil voice. “It seems almost a miracle—but then all life is a miracle, *n’est-ce pas?*”

They stayed on, fascinated by the brawling river. Every minute, it seemed, it grew warmer.

“The temperature is rising at least a degree a minute,” said Philippa dogmatically. “But look!” called Philippa. “What’s that black thing on that cake of ice, there—there—where I’m pointing?”

“It’s moving,” said Mademoiselle, her lips suddenly white. “Something is being carried down. It’s too small to be a man.”

The cake of ice with its living burden came nearer to them. They heard a distant sound ——

“Barking,” said Mademoiselle. “It’s a dog. Oh, the poor thing—— Can’t somebody save it. The cake of ice he’s on will be floating near to shore like those others in a few

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moments—that would be the chance to get him off. Oh, I wish I were there. Won't somebody help!" She was wringing her hands and the tears were raining down her face. "The poor little chap. Help him—somebody."

As if her words had been heard they saw a man making his way down to a point where a knoll of higher ground still remained uncovered by the water, a point near which the newly liberated current was sweeping down the icy debris.

"He's kneeling down, trying to coax the dog to jump." Philippa's sharp eyes were following his every motion. "Oh—I say—it's Mr. Ross Cuthbert. I do hope he'll be careful. If he slipped ——"

"That isn't Mr. Ross Cuthbert. It cannot be," said Madame with conviction.

"Oh, Madame, I'm quite sure it is. Don't you think it is, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes," said Mademoiselle tonelessly. "I am sure it is."

Helen looked sympathetically up into her face.

Driven closer by the current the big cakes of ice closed in around the one on which was

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the little black dog. His frantic yelping could now be plainly heard. The ice-pack drifted near—nearer to the spot where the man knelt, his hand outstretched coaxingly.

“Oh, why doesn’t the dog jump—why doesn’t he *jump*? If he doesn’t I’m afraid Ross ——” Philippa heard Mademoiselle say under her breath.

Simultaneously they heard a shout from shore and saw a flying figure.

“Oh, how could he? It’s death!” A voice that no one of them had ever heard before wailed in their ears.

But Madame has pressed close to her daughter.

“But, *ma bien-aimée*, he is then *good*, that Ross Cuthbert.” Her voice was absolutely indescribable in its medley of emotions; terror—regret—triumph. More than anything else it was joy.

But Mimi was too convulsed with terror to do more than hold her mother’s hand in an agonized grip. Philippa yelled:

“Oh, there’s Jeff—I wondered how he—What’s he ——? Oh, a lasso! We all used to laugh at him. Always trying to lasso

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everything. Missed, you egg! Oh! Got him! Got him just right. Over the right arm and under the left. Oh, *good* old Jeff! Great work! *Gosh, but I'm glad Jeff got in it."*

"If he jumps I'm afraid he'll get under the ice," Mademoiselle moaned.

"Can't. If he misses Jeff'll pull him out. Now's the time. Jump, you simp!"

Cuthbert had jumped, the little black animal clutched close to him. Mimi hid her eyes.

"If he should get under the ice ——!"

"But he made it!" rang out Philippa's triumphant voice. "Good work, Old Scout! But Jeff helped you!"

Mimi took down her hands ——

"I don't see him."

"Oh, the ice spilled him off, of course, but Jeff is pulling him in. See? He's holding the dog up above his head. There!"

Mimi was in her mother's arms, her face hidden.

"How I have been hard," her mother murmured to her. "Because of one man to always distrust! A man who would risk his life for a dog ——"

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"And it wasn't even his own!" sobbed Mimi.

"I suppose they'll be getting engaged now," said Philippa, in a low voice to Helen. "And I'll say it's time. Mademoiselle must be almost twenty-four."

They all felt too limp to move. They sat watching the swiftly flowing river. The wind was dying down and the sun shone warmly. All at once they heard, down under the eaves, a robin sing.

"Why it *is* spring," said Philippa, in genuine astonishment.

Helen, standing back of her, put a hand on her shoulder.

"Yes, it's spring," she said. And I'm—I'm *happy*. "And—I've known this for a long time but I couldn't say it before. You and Madame were right. And—to-day—I know somehow that I'm only at the beginning ——"

Philippa wheeled around. Helen's face was wistfully sweet and she looked at Philippa with affectionate eyes.

"Oh, good," Philippa burst out. "Now *everything's* just trick. We're friends and you're happy again and it's spring and I'm

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friends with everybody and pretty soon I'll go home and Doreen's wedding will be lots of fun and everybody's happy. Gosh, it must be ten hours since lunch. I'll say I'm starved."

THE END

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